



ISSUE 4 SPECTRUM

AMBIENT/INDUSTRIAL/EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC CULTURE MAGAZINE

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 STATEART
 BAD SECTOR
 BLACK LUNG
 COLD SPRING
 WARREN MEAD
 INADE PROFILE
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 DER BLOTHARSCH
 DREAM INTO DUST
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DISSECTING TABLE
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LAW: OUR LIFE THROUGH YOUR DEATH

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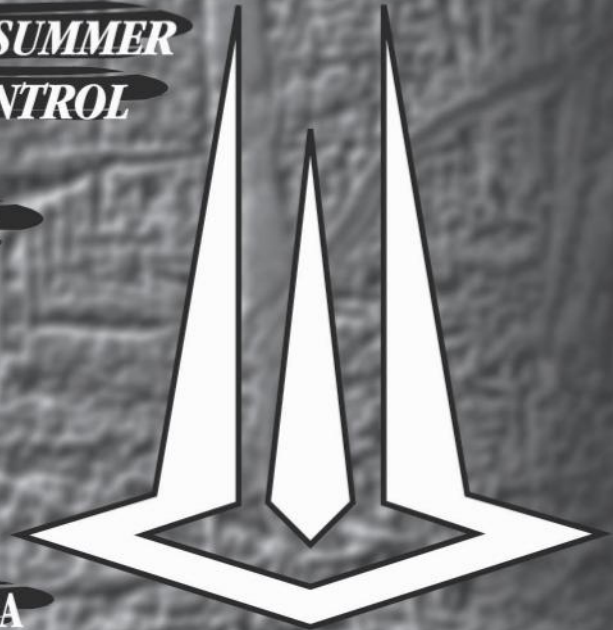
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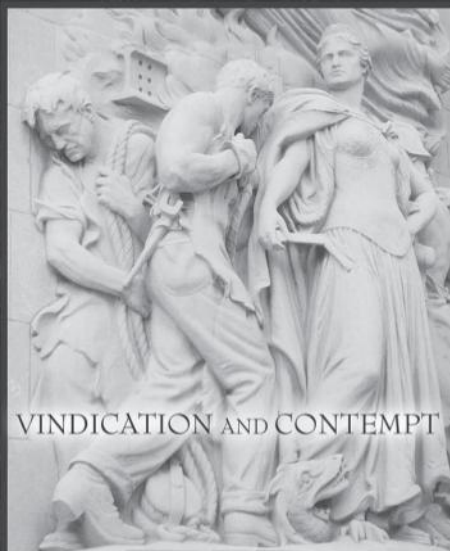
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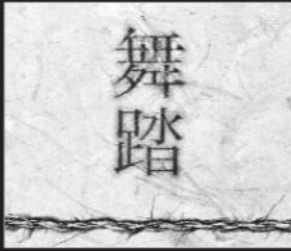
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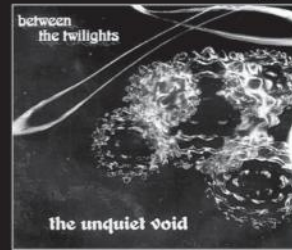
Various Artists



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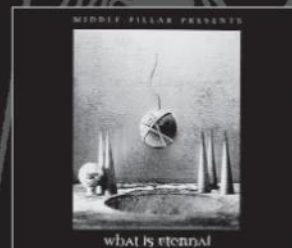


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COLD SPRING

Release Schedule Summer 2000

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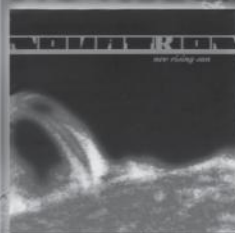
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SPECTRUM MAGAZINE ISSUE 4: EDITORIAL SEPTEMBER 2000

Well, first off I would like to extend my greetings and likewise gratitude to you for picking up a copy of this, the fourth instalment of Spectrum Magazine which has been released with 9 (or so) months elapsing since the last issue. As always general improvements have been made and additionally you might note that there have been some minor changes to font size and layout. Obviously I hope these alterations have been for the better, but basically the reduced font size was a prerequisite to keeping the publication's overall length in check.

In regards to the review section I took up the offer of one Chris Forth to undertake proof reading of the review section, to ultimately combat the nagging spelling and grammatical errors that slipped through in previous issues. I will say this assistance has been invaluable and I extend my gratitude for his input and suggestions. Also as with last issue, JC Smith has again enlisted his services in the review department. I do grudgingly admit that he often puts my 'literary' efforts to shame, BUT, where JC may focus on providing a few select high quality contributions, I took to the quite mammoth task of tackling the remaining 140 or so reviews!. While on the topic of reviews, if you contact any labels pursuant to their herein enclosed advertisements or otherwise seek out any releases after reading a written review, it would be greatly appreciated if you could mention this publication to the label/ artist/ mailorder that you obtain it through (thanks in advance for your assistance on this!).

As for the interview side of things there are a swag of great artists and labels featured in this issue, and just so you are aware all response transcripts were typed and submitted by the relevant individuals. Thus, in the interest of retaining the original flavor of each contribution I have generally not undertaken any corrections to grammar or style (unless requested otherwise). Additionally, while I never envisage to implement any sort of censorship regime with the content of this publication, if anyone feels like taking issue with any statements herein, do keep in mind that by publishing words and exploring ideas (or even displaying images) does not automatically equate to belief in, or endorsement of such matters. This publication will not accept responsibility for any offense caused, as essentially how could I personally (or anyone else for that matter) ever legislate to accommodate every individuals' own filters and perceptions that may subsequently taint their ultimate reactions? So if you are aware that you are at all prone to being offended, why not try keeping your legs straight to avoid those embarrassing knee jerk reactions!! (hmmm....could that in any way be also read as a metaphor?).

At this point in time I don't know exactly when Issue 5# may eventuate as this really depends on my current (albeit vague) plans of doing a bit of extended traveling through Europe sometime in 2001. Personally with my limited spare time, this publication may seem to some to be a sporadic endeavor, however thus far I have managed to have an issue released every 6-9 months. But then again only time will tell if the next issue will arrive before the commencement of my global trek or has to wait until my return. All I can add on this front is that patience is a virtue....

Also making reference to promotional items, I ask that if you are planning on sending material for review please consider what you send in relation to its relevance to the general content of this publication. For example, I have never been (nor never will be) a metal magazine, but from time to time such items still turn up in my mailbox. As much as I have got better things to do then to be constantly sending back unsolicited material (so I therefore don't..), I'm likewise sure these labels/artists don't have money to burn by sending out promotional items that simply do not serve their intended purpose (...and just so it is said, this policy is not limited to metal only). If you do want to send something along, but are at all unsure, your best bet would be to get in contact via e-mail first. Likewise with the amount of music I now obtain between issues (either purchased or gained promotionally) I can now no longer guarantee review space for every item, HOWEVER the more recent the release, (and more importantly if sparks my positive interest), it puts the said item in a much better position for me being motivated to write something about it!

To flag any potential inquiries, all back issues are sold out directly from me, although some of my distributors may still have some copies. Also at this point there is no plans on furnishing them with a repress, as basically I would prefer to put time, effort and money into new editions.

Lastly as I can't really think of much else to add (other than unnecessary mindless ramble, or statements of "I hope you enjoy the issue"), so I will taper...off..... about..... here.....

O'v'r'n'out.....end transmission..... - Richard Stevenson

EDITOR - INTERVIEWER - REVIEWER - LAYOUT DESIGNER & GENERAL WORKAHOLIC ETC: RICHARD STEVENSON

CONTRIBUTORS: JC SMITH - REVIEWS AND INADE PROFILE/ CHRIS FORTH - REVIEW SECTION PROOF READER/ WARREN MEAD - COVER IMAGE.

Greetings and thanks:

To all artists/ labels/ distributors & shops who have supported this publication via providing interviews, promotional items, advertisements and (heaven forbid!) stocking copies! Your collective input and support in invaluable and particular gratitude is extended to all @ Malignant Records. JC Smith and Chris Forth for their input & assistance. Mick Stevenson for general tech assistance and likewise for building the PC that birthed this 4th issue. James Leslie for allowing me the use of his PC that solidified the 'Spectrum' vision via Issues 1# thru 3#. Joseph Aquino for the P. Kerr quote. Lastly all other family members and friends for interest and support (even if you don't always 'get' the musical path on which I travel).

This issue is dedicated to the loving memory of Betty McClure. (29 October, 1919 – 18 March, 2000).

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S P E C T R U M M A G A Z I N E @ H O T M A I L . C O M

The cover image is a cropped version of the photographic artwork entitled 'Soldiers' – captured by Warren Mead and featured (un-cropped) in the 'Dark Poland' exhibition of June, 2000.

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"The greatest irony is that man passed his day of judgement completely unawares. The nuclear bomb that exploded in 1945, and for everything that happened since has just been fallout. For most people this is old news, and no one is bothered very much. How can you be bothered by something that has already happened, that still exists beyond your control, that defines you? The future - any future, even one of the kind once described in science fiction - no longer exists. There is the status quo and not much else. All of which perhaps explains why there is no imperative - social or scientific - to do anything about changing things. Armageddon, Apocalypse, End Time, Holocaust - call it what you will, it's been and gone and nobody really cares" - Phillip Kerr (excerpt taken from and deliberately quoted out of context of its source 'The Second Angel' 1998).

WARREN

Rather than provide some long winded introduction, the images created by photographic artist Warren Mead say immensely more than could ever be expressed by words (and personally speaking I was so taken by his 'Dark Poland' exhibition I am now the proud owner of the original piece "ócjów" shown adjacent). Anyway, peruse the accompanying pictures to see exactly what I mean and read on to gain some insight into their creator...

Starting with the rudimentary, can you please introduce yourself and provide some details on what studies have you undertaken in your pursuit of artistic photography? I am a creator of images that to some are deeply disturbing and to others, are perceived as being mystical and profoundly beautiful. My work is in no way the prodigy of formal study. My style and technique as a photographer has been developed by acknowledging a vision and chasing a particular look through experimentation which I feel I have now mastered.

Given that your recent exhibition 'Dark Poland' centres around a series taken during your 2 years of travel through the country, I wanted to ask what initially drew you to Poland as a place? Did you expect to discover you had such a profound interest in the country when you first chose to travel there? I was initially drawn to Poland after discovering the Polish artist Beksinski. Beksinski's work is extremely haunting and had a depth to it that I could not comprehend mainly because I had never seen anything painted with such concise vision and dedication to genre before. I explored Polish art further and discovered a wide array of artists who were painting dark imagery and decided that it would surely be an interesting country to

visit if not just for the art. I guess I was expecting to find an artistic depth in Poland that I couldn't find in Australia and on this level I was far from disappointed.

It now seems that you have such a deep connection with the country that you hope to half your time living between Australia and Poland. Is being a photographer (freelance or artistic) a viable pursuit for you if splitting your times between these countries? Living in Poland opens up the German as well as the Scandinavian markets for me and offers an abundance of opportunities in both fine art and commercial photography. As an artist, it is essential for me to institute and maintain radical contrast in my life and living between 2 countries as diverse as Poland is to Australia offers this. Whether or not this is a viable pursuit depends purely on my determination to make it so and sustain it as a lifestyle. I have a base in Krakow and in Melbourne and as long as I'm not away from either country for too long I can easily slip into the groove and get on with it.

As your 'Dark Poland' collection in your exhibition has specific parallels with the imagery underground gothic and dark ambient scenes, alternatively I wanted to ask the response has been from the more 'high brow' artistic community? Indeed. I wasn't sure what the response was going to be to "Dark Poland" and I have to tell you that I did not specifically aim it at any particular market. I received a lot of media coverage prior to the exhibition and the opening night proved to be a real eye opener for me. The gallery was packed with up to 300 people from such a broad cross section of the community. I noticed that a huge contingency of very rich looking, well dressed people were in attendance and it was there and then that I knew I'd appealed to a much wider audience than I had expected. The cheapest piece in "Dark Poland" was \$500 and a lot of the exhibition sold to very wealthy people.

With your exhibition encompassing 20 finished pieces of a variety of imagery, yet broadly categorized under the 'Dark Poland' theme, how many images did you have to sift through to compile it down into the finished collection? "Dark Poland" was shot on only 7 rolls of film. I am not an artist who fires away with the shutter and then wades through thousands of images to pick out the gems. I know I've got a winner as soon as I shoot it. I am extremely selective about what I photograph and can usually pull 3 to 4 exhibition quality shots from each roll. I will go to any length required to get the shot I'm after and if for some reason I fail due to whatever reason, I suffer incredibly from it and spend at least four days murderously brooding. The fact that it took 2 years to compile the images for "Dark Poland" was largely due to the weather conditions. I wanted a still, Winter look with snow and ice and this is not always available during the Polish Winter.

The titles of your works seem to reference a simple description of the pieces (ie: 'Krakow', 'Teutonic Ruins', 'Soldiers' etc) rather than attempting to imbue some deeper meaning with a poetically phrased name. What is your view on the images you create from the point of assigning them with titles? There was a time when I did attempt to imbue a deeper meaning in my images with titles such as "Dawn of the Iconoclast" which was a popular poster that I produced a few years ago. I scrutinised the finished pieces for "Dark Poland" with the idea of also embellishing each one with a poetically phrased title but reached the conclusion that the majority of these images projected an ambiguous quality and to thrust them into a definitive direction would have possibly taken away from this.

Without simply placing the finished pieces in sterile metal frames, your choice of framing with deeply textured wood added an archaic/organic resonance to the pictures themselves. I believe there is even a story behind the choice and discovery of this framing material? When I take on a project of this scale I have the whole concept from start to finish swimming around in my head. "Dark Poland" looks at a time in history when building materials were very heavy duty such as stone and massive timbers. I wanted the frames to have this medieval resonance to them and held the project off until the appropriate timber turned up. I happened

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AN EXHIBITION BY WARREN MEAD

You are invited to the opening night of Dark Poland
Friday June 16
7.00 - 9.00pm

Gallery hours 11am to 5pm

Enquiries 0408 031 253



upon an old demolished building one day in Melbourne and discovered to my delight a plethora of beautiful old hardwood that I had identified as being Messmate and aged at around 80 years. The construction of the frames from this timber required the Supreme Effort and nearly killed me. By the time the frames were finished with glass and everything else, they weighed as much as 16kg each.

Initially I became aware of your exhibition as the imagery had specific parallels with dark ambient music and then was then quite surprised to find you were a fan of the said scene. How did you come to be aware of dark ambient styles of music and is this a scene you still follow? I became interested in dark ambient music after reading several years ago of research that had been done by the US Military into psycho-acoustic weaponry based on the theory that sound frequencies, particularly subs, could alter moods and even kill. This reading led me to "Lustmord" who was doing things with military tone generators and after working my way through "Heresy" and "Monstrous Soul" I began to discover that what I really enjoyed listening to was pure subs and this led me to Thomas Koner whose album "Permafrost" is to me a masterpiece and a great source of inspiration. I can't listen to dark ambient that is structured any more. I'm purely into works that are devoted to ominous sub frequencies and I have some really serious speakers with extended sub frequency range that could easily smash windows if I let loose on them. I have discovered a greater appreciation for the natural sounds around me from exploring dark ambient music and tuning my hearing to low frequencies that most people would probably filter out. Living in Poland isolated me somewhat from the dark ambient scene.

In another general conversation you stated that the aura of Poland as a place negated the need to listen to dark ambience. Can you describe this further and likewise some of your general experiences taken from and places visited during your travels? I live in Krakow which is an intact medieval city. There is a suburb of Krakow called Kazimierz. Kazimierz was once a bustling centre for Krakow's Jewish population but today stands as a desolate memory to the thousands of people who were murdered there by the SS during WW2. Auschwitz is only 65km from Krakow and was the site of mass murder and misery for nearly 5 years. It is not a well known fact that 5 million Polish civilians were also murdered along with the Jews. There is reference to WW2 everywhere in Poland and each point of reference is an insight into the horror that went on there. Dark ambient music for me is a method of inducing a certain mind set that effectively triggers introspection. Due to Poland's tragic past, an omnescent, sombre aura hangs in the air like a morbid fog and I found the presence of this awesome and also inspiring and no dark ambient music that I had with me could come even close to producing the depths of introspection that I experienced in that country.

The subject matter of 'Dark Poland' centres around focusing on the past architecture and likewise the spirit of the country, ultimately shrouding everything in a regressive historical light (created via your photographic techniques). Given this assessment, what historical epochs interest you, if not inspire the images you create? I am deeply interested in medieval Europe. A desperate amount of fear is apparent in the architecture and not only fear of physical invaders. The fear of spiritual





attack is apparent through the addition of gargoyles and other entities on the roof tops and the crucifix is everywhere. I find this era extremely evocative and loaded with mythic resonance.

A dark religious aura is evident in your works, rather that it is unavoidable given the subject matter, however what role does religion, (organized or otherwise) or even personally spirituality play in your life? Ostensibly I am an atheist. I do identify with a higher entity but I do not support any doctrine or definition of just what that might be. My interest in the symbolism of the Catholic Church is purely derived from my perception of it as being a source of fear and foreboding for those who would dare to stray. I feel disturbed and restless in churches and have never experienced a religious calling of any kind. I am attracted to the crucifix there is no doubt about it. I think it is a beautifully powerful symbol but its call is purely aesthetical.


Looking at a technical aspect of your image creation, how much are they a product of meticulously laboured dark room techniques once the actual framing and capturing of the shot has been completed? My work is predominately shot on black & white film and the high-contrast look that I capture is a product of many different combinations. I always shoot on TMax 3200 which is an extremely high speed film and which produces a grainy high contrast look. I usually underexpose the negatives to increase the contrast and print the images on cold tone paper to increase the starkness. I really apply my stamp by bleaching the prints in a solution of potassium ferricyanide and potassium bromide and then if necessary, air brushing particular areas to either highlight clouds or to add subtle colour. The result is often something bordering on a painting.

There appears to be very few photographic artists (or other artists for that matter) which focus on dark gothic type imagery that are respected as 'serious artists' other then being perceived to be derived from certain subcultures of music. Do you agree with the assessment and how would it apply if at all to you? In Australia this is certainly the case. Australia is all fluff and colour which is a reflection on how easy life is here. I believe however that there is a strong market for the type of imagery that you describe and I have just proven it. My experiences and adventures in life have led me to a deeper understanding of humanity and this was made evident by the success in "Dark Poland's ability to attract a very conservative and wealthy audience. I believe my work has now matured to the point whereby what I'm really trying to say is being felt by those who see it and this must be the path to being accepted as a credible artist.

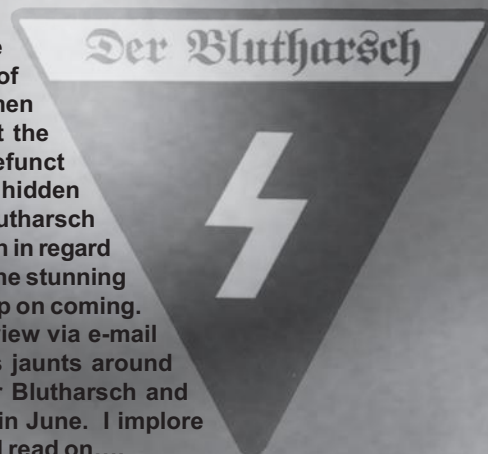
You made mention to me that your commercial success as a photographer has been slightly marred by the infiltration of your dark, gothic styled influences. Is your direction and vision of aesthetics so imbedded in your subconscious that you find it happening as a natural instinct? Absolutely. I am for some reason driven to take the kinds of images that I do. My fine art photographic style is way too strong for commercial agencies and the slightest sniff of it coming into my commercial work definitely goes against me but I find it hard to turn off what it is that enables me to take photographs and this is sometimes a dilemma.

What are your future plans and aspirations for future series and exhibitions and do you hope to explore different topical matter? I'm having an exhibition in Krakow in October of much lighter material. It's all futuristic, impressionist type imagery that I am presently photographing here in Australia. What I really need at the moment is a holiday. I'll be back in Krakow until June next year and plan to have an exhibition in Melbourne or Sydney at least once a year. In regard to exploring different topical matter, I will journey to wherever my vision takes me.

Thanks you extremely much for your participation. Is there anything you would like to ad in conclusion? I believe all points have been covered.



Der Blutharsch have risen from relative obscurity to cult notoriety in a mere matter of years, but is actually quite understandable when you consider it has one Herr Albin Julius at the helm, who was formerly half of the now defunct medieval/ folk/ industrial duo '...the moon lay hidden beneath a cloud'. Quickly establishing Der Blutharsch as one of the most active Austrian projects both in regard to recording outputs and live performances, the stunning neo-classical/ ritual/ industrial works just keep on coming. Albin was kind enough to provide this interview via e-mail during June – July 2000 in between various jaunts around Europe for further live performances as Der Blutharsch and additionally as a session musician of Death in June. I implore you to sit down with a good bottle of wine and read on....



Although Der Blutharsch first started as a one off side project of '...the moon lay hidden beneath a cloud', it has now become your main project with the former being defunct. Can you please describe some historical documentation of how you became involved in the industrial neo-folk/ neo classical music scene, through the evolution, demise and re-establishment etc of your above musical projects? Well, I started doing music in 1989, when I and Elisabeth formed a band, together with a friend (on guitars). We stayed together in this line up, and also played two gigs. All we did, even the live performances, was on a "session" base, so we went on stage and just created music, without any preparation. Amazingly it worked. Then we decided to go to the studio and record a proper CD, but we had to find out, that our way of "sessioning" didn't work in the studio. Everything there was to sterile, so we failed, especially our guitar player could develop his "magick". So, we decided to continue as a "duo" and formed "The Moon lay hidden beneath a Cloud". I decided to have a CD recorded in 6 month and so did we, the first CD was ready, and by accident we ended up being distributed via World Serpent Distribution. We released a couple of records, until I wrote some music which didn't fit into the musical and artistic concept of "TMLHBAC", so I decided to release it under the banner of "Der Blutharsch". This was in 1997, when I released the self titled Pict.12". Initially I had planned to release only this 12", followed by a 7" and then to finish this project. At that time it happened, that my relation with Elisabeth ended, and under these circumstances we thought that TMLHBAC had to rest forever. I continued with Der Blutharsch.

Not to insinuate that '...the moon lay hidden beneath a cloud' was not a serious project, nonetheless Der Blutharsch appear to have a more solidified approach and serious intent. Do you agree with this statement? Well, not really. When I did TMLHBAC I took it as serious as I take Der Blutharsch. Of course, interest changed, and so did the music and the topics in the music. I released music since now nearly 10 years, and it's only natural, that the music changes and develops. When I started doing

The Moon... I was very much occupied with medieval stuff, so the music was also a reflection of these interests, over the years my passion changed, and did lead into what I do now. Even with

The Moon... this change was visible, I, personally think, "The smell of blood.." was already more Blutharsch then The Moon...

Selected pieces of ...t.m.l.h.b.a.c have been reused under the moniker of Der Blutharsch particularly in live performances. What was the reasoning behind this? As I just mentioned, I think, "The smell..." was already the beginning of Der Blutharsch, and the two songs you talk about, are from this record. Those are the two songs I always regretted to have used in The Moon, so I just wanted to bring them back to where they belong to.....and so did I.

What does the use of the sigil rune within you logo and the use of the old Germanic font within the group's title personally signify for you? I am into runes, and therefore they have a very important, but also very personal meaning for me. I use them for several reasons, but I won't talk about runes. They have magic, but I think if you analyse them, they loose it. I use the old Germanic typesetting because I like it, and it is very aesthetic. It was our typesetting for a couple of hundreds of years, till it got banned by A. Hitler in 1942.

Can you please list the items released under the Der Blutharsch title thus far including what quantities they were limited to? ART 9: Der Blutharsch Pct.12" - 200 copies/ WKN 1: Der Blutharsch 7" - 250 copies/ WKN 2: Sad Song Singers video - 150 copies (a document of a life performance of D.B and Deutsch Nepal, feat. Laurie Amat)/ WKN 3: Der Sieg des Lichtes.... CD - also released as a 5x7" Boxset (109 copies)/ WKN 4: The moment of truth 10" ??? copies/ WKN 5: Apöcälypic Cimäx 2 - D.B with Deutsch Nepal 404 copies/ WKN 6: Der Gott der Eisen wachsen ließ mCD - 600 copies/ WKN 7: Gold gab ich für Eisen mCD/Videobox - 1000 copies/ WKN 8: The pleasures received in pain CD/ WKN 9: spli with Ain Soph 7" 700 copies/ WKN 10: The track of the hunted CD(also in a vinyl edition of 2000 copies)/ WKN 11: The long way home Pct.12" - 555 copies/ WKN 12: 7" - 66 copies. Well, guess that's all for the moment, might even be, that I mixed up some of the limitations, but I have no clue anymore...

Der Blutharsch is primarily as solo project, however you use a myriad of collaborators between your recorded output and live performances. Can you detail some of the collaborators and do they have any sort of permanence in the Der Bluthatsch line-up?

Initially I started as a "one man"-project, and although I now work with various people, I am the "chief of command". Fortunately I got offered by John Murphy to be supported by him on drums, and Wilhelm Herich as well offered me to help me live, as we already were good friends then. It worked out well, and since then the "live" line-up is John, Wilhelm and myself. In the studio I sometimes get support by various people, i.e. Boyd Rice, but mostly they are a kind of "guests".

From the above, I have noted that Klaus from Tesco (being your live vocalist) uses an alternate stage name of 'Wilhelm Herich'. What is the reasoning behind this and is their any inherent significance?

Well, you should ask him. Klaus is my friend on a personal base, and



Wilhelm Herich (from Genocide Organ) is a supporter on stage, nevertheless I love both of them.

You yourself have now become the main collaborator with Douglas P in Death in June on the past two albums. How did this come about, will this continue and are you satisfied with the results to date? Well, I met Douglas a couple of years ago, after a concert of D.i.J. We stayed in touch, he visited me a couple of times in Wien, and we became friends. He liked what I did with The Moon lay hidden... and when I went to Australia for holiday he invited me to visit him and stay at his house. We then both thought, it would be interesting to lock us up in a studio, in the middle of (very, very!!!) hot Australian summer, and just see what happens. We didn't kill each other, but ended up with "Take Care And Control" after 10 days. We toured twice together, and when we played Australia, we had 6 days in between Sydney and Melbourne, so we just went back to this nice little studio in the Adelaide hills, and, well, ended up with "Operation Hummingbird". I would have to lie, if I would say that I am not satisfied by the result. It was a pleasure and big fun to record the records, and I still like to listen to them sometimes, although I can't hear the songs at the moment anymore, after 35 times of playing the songs live. Nevertheless, I never felt as part of D.i.J. and I never will. D.i.J. is Doug's baby, I have my own. It always was just working/creating with a friend. I know that we will work together in the future, but I don't think (and I don't want to...) on a permanent base.

Between your collaborations with Death in June, and the new distribution deal for both groups with Tesco Organisation (and also considering that Klaus one of the individuals behind Tesco is a live and studio vocalist for Der Blutharsch) it would seem that this is more than mealy music networking, rather the formation of a close knit brotherhood. Please comment as you see fit. Yes. That's how it is. Klaus got to know Doug via me, being on tour together, and they as well became friends. So, one day, in Italy, Douglas mentioned that he would like to do something on TESCO, which finally did lead into his, and our (Ian Read as well) distribution deal. Klaus and I were friends, and sooner or later this had to lead into this relation as well. Yes, it is a really good situation. It's easy and a pleasure to work with them, they know exactly what to do, from packaging to other things. If I have an idea, they know how to realise it, etc..# But also it's fun to be with them, to go on holiday or just to do crazy things. Being with them is being with "kamerads", yes, it is kind of a brotherhood. "They are ours!"

The close knit circle alluded to in the above question has further relevance as it has been mentioned that you recently assisting Genocide Organ (fronted by Klaus) in their live performances in England. Was this a one off occurrence or are you now part of this cult act? No, this was just a one off. They played London and Leeds, and I joined them, initially because we afterwards went for holiday together in Scotland. So, they asked me, if I would like to join them on stage, and I wanted. Anyway, it ended up in a disaster. The sound on stage was so bad, that I couldn't hear any of the sounds, and I initially was meant to do percussion and rhythms, but in finally it ended just in "big noiz's".

One element of Der Blutharsch is the live performance side of things with a number of small tours having been undertaken over the past two years. Where have these travels taken you and what has the response been like? (controversial or otherwise). It did lead me/us through whole Europe. We played nearly every European country and Australia. I am talking about more than 40 gigs in 1 1/2 years! The reactions were always

phantastic, only Athens audience was a bit cool, very goth and I think they were not amused by the two Germanic guys shouting at them :-). But everywhere else the audience was absolutely enthusiastic.

Where will your current and upcoming tours take you and which other groups will you be touring with? For summer there is only one concert with D.i.J. scheduled. I have a lot of offers for Der Blutharsch, but don't want to play Europe that soon again. We are talking about an Australian tour followed by a tour through the USA, but this are only plans at the moment. If, it would be the "rat-pack", aka: D.i.J./Non/Der Blutharsch. I would like to tour Europe again next year (this year I have enough other plans) and then with D.i.J. again. Touring with Doug and Boyd is more than touring, it's big fun, and always the funniest and strangest things happened to us. Boyd wrote a really good tour diary in an US-mag called "Panick". If you can find it somewhere, get it!!!

Last issue when I interviewed Deustch Nepal I questioned Lina about his collaborations with you. The point I was quizzing was that considering his project has no meaning behind it (his description), did he see any anomalies with working with Der Blutharsch (given that certain implications with your style and presentation would 'brand' you with an agenda amongst certain factions). As I can now ask you directly with no need for assumption, what agenda if any is inherent in your music and inspiration? Well, I accord to Lina Baby Doll: Alcohol, Sex and a little bit of Fun... :-)

The neo-classical compositions of Der Blutharsch certainly contain little if any modern elements, therefore what historical

time periods interest you? Likewise what philosophies and ideologies are reflected in Der Blutharsch's works? There are no specific ideologies or political views reflected in my work. I am interested in various things, but Der Blutharsch is not a vehicle for dogmas or whatever. If there are several specific topics to be seen in my work, they are simply a reflection of my interests and my occupation with several things. I am interested in all time periods, sometimes more in recent times, but as well in the very past....

To what extent does paganism, heathenism, Christian mysticism (grail myth, knight templars etc) interest you? I was very much occupied by these a couple of years ago, but meanwhile I went forwards in history.

An image associated with your interview in Runen Magazine issue 1# depicts the burning an American flag. Did you supply this image for use with the interview, and if so I wanted to ask to if this a statement against the country itself or more of a symbolic gesture against the capitalist western ideal that the us embodies? This picture was enclosed by the editor, and was not provided by me. It has nothing to do with the interview or my person. Nevertheless I dislike the politics of the USA as a "world-police", and personally think they should "Fuck off" Europe. But, as I said, that's my personal opinion.

The use of samples of Charles Manson speaking about topics of strength, honour and pride have cropped up more than once within Der Blutharsch's musical framework (and likewise have also been utilised by affiliated artists such as Blood Axis and Turbund Sturmwerk). What attracts you to the ideas being put forward by this media demonised individual? He's the evil, the personalised devil...

:). It's a phenomenon of so called civilized culture - the rebirth of the eternal victim.

Do you subscribe to/ follow the ideas and philosophies of Charles Manson's organization A.T.W.A (Air Trees Water Animals)? No.

With your music containing a blend of real and synthetic instrumentation, I wanted to ask exactly what types of equipment you employ and how you approach the construction of a track? Do you write material prior to recording sessions or are the tracks entirely constructed in the studio?

I use everything sounds and noises can be produced with. Sampling machines, effect machines, tape-loops, I record loads of sounds with Dat-machines outside, but I as well use authentic instruments, such as "dulcimer", "hurdy gurdy", flutes, pipes, drums and so on.....To record a track I simply just start, I take a noise or sound or even just a rhythm and then start constructing around, add some things, take some others away, and if I am happy, i get a result I like.

Some people have criticized Der Blutharsch's sound as being below par, however I get the feeling that the production is intentionally flawed to give a timeless feel to the compositions. Opinions? Also why do you avoid using track titles let alone providing any information on recordings?

Is this again to enhance a timeless aesthetic? Well, I have no idea. There is no special reason behind this. I mean, I do not do it for a certain purpose, it's just the kind of sound I prefer. I don't use any track titles, as I don't see a CD simply as a collection of songs. For me the CD is one piece of music, and the CD title reflects the main atmosphere I see in it. I mean, does a movie title each scene????

All of your releases have been produced on your own label WKN and often ridiculously limited in quantity, which now fetch insane prices on internet auction sites. If there is an obvious demand why are many of your releases still limited in quantity? When I started with Der Blutharsch, I never expected the phantastic response. I released the Pct. 12" in an edition of 200, and I sold 15 to a local record store. After half a year they still had 2 copies left, which I (fortunately, heheheh...) bought back then. I never expected that people pay such ridiculous prices for my releases. I heard, that the WKN 1 7" sold for \$ 800.- on eBay. Some people seem not to have to care about money, for this I could have nice holiday. Meanwhile I increased the quantities, but everything I release already sold out even before I have it from the pressing factory. I released the new CD also as an edition of 2000 copies in Vinyl, and they already nearly sold out, so what shall I do??? On the other hand, I like to release vinyls, they are something special for me. CD's are for the masses, vinyl for special people, and the smaller the edition, the more I love it myself. My fav baby is the WKN 12". One day I will release a 7" in an edition of 16 copies, and I will love it....

Cost also seems to bear little consideration in packaging and presentation of releases, particularly with reference to the deluxe "Gold gab ich fur Eisen" video/ MCD box set. Why do you choose to go to such lengths and are you even able to break even with costs when releasing such items?

Yes, at least I get the money back. The mentioned boxset is another story, as it was totally overpriced by WSD, but unfortunately I had no influence in their price politics. In the shops it ended for DM 100.,, which is ridiculously high, The 5x7" box I did was sold to people for less then \$ 18.- incl. P+P. For this I just got back the costs and made a little bit of money to buy a couple of bottles of wine. But, I don't care. I made enough money on the CD. WKN 12 for example was never sold, I made it and gave it away for free. Sometimes it's nice to do these things. I will also do such things in the future.

How satisfied are you with the finished presentation of the video/ MCD packaging and additionally the actual live video footage? As both the live set on the video and MCD were 26 minutes each (& encompassing the same tracks) was this the full set list of the majority of you tour shows?

I am nearly 100% satisfied with the result, except some small things. For example, the green colour is not exactly the same for the video/booklet and CD wallet, but that's due to different cardboard. Besides that, I like it, although I think it was overpriced by WSD. The video/mCd features the whole set we played on this tour. As me and Fire+Ice were the support for D.i.J. I thought it would be a good idea not to play more than 30 minutes. For support this is fair enough. Although I never would play too long, as we never did with TMLHBAC (the longest gig we played was 38 minutes). I prefer it short but brutal. Attack!!!!!!

Listening to you second full length CD 'the pleasures received in pain' I could not help but get the feeling that you had sampled Brighter Death Now for part of the background noise. Is this at all correct? Well, not from my knowledge.

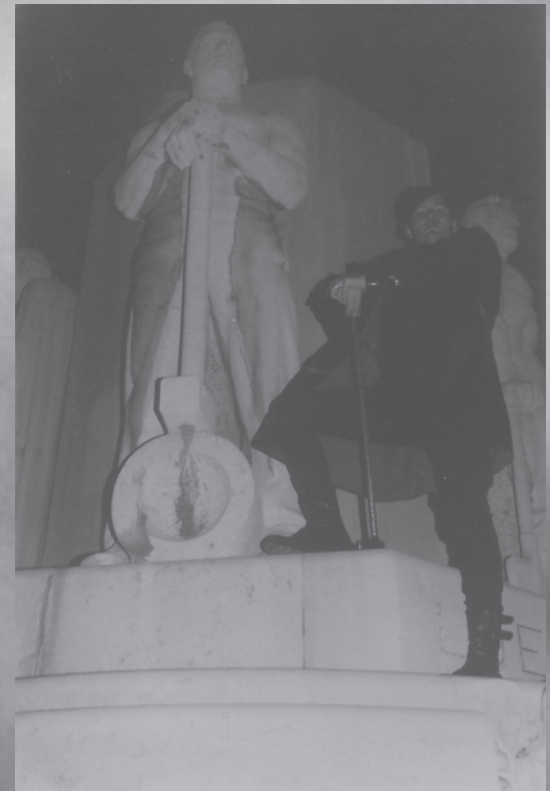
Well more specifically I am referring to the last track on the album and giving it further listens I am almost positive that there are pitch shifted loops taken from B.D.N's 'Innerwar' album. I have even gone as far as quizzing others on this with them holding the same opinion. Are you absolutely sure??!! Caught! But, please don't tell Roger. His Royalty requests will be immense. I never could afford that much beer we would like to get... :)

Other samples contained within you music include (euro centric) era recordings, speeches, choir vocals and classical loops. What is the general process in firstly locating these sample and secondly determining their suitability for use within Der Blutharsch? I don't analyse. I just construct. Normally I start with a loop, a sound or a rhythm. Then I start building up things around. Mostly it happens by instinkt. Very seldomly I hear a sound/cut-up and save it for later use. I don't store sounds.

What releases are you currently working on between new Der Blutharsch material, your other collaborative projects, new items for issue on you other label Hau Ruck etc? I recently released WKN 10, "The track of the hunted". There are no other plans for D.B releases for this year. In autumn I hope to start recording new material, also I have an offer to write the music for an American theatre-play. We'll see what happens. On Hau Ruck there are several releases planned, first a mCD (HR! 7) of "La Maison Moderne", a piece of pure dance music, followed by a 7" (Tribe of Circle) and a 10" of an Austro-Australian project named Novo Homo. They all will be out before summer. In autumn I will have two Cd's be released on Hau Ruck, the second CD of Novy Svet, followed by the debut-CD of a French band called "derniere volonte". Also I received material which shall lead into 3 new 7" for winter.

With this theatre play you mention above, can you expand on this a little? Are you at all aware how they came across your music? (considering you are an artist working within a relatively obscure underground scene). To cut a long story short, I met the director somewhere in the hills outside Vienna, and all ended up in a big party. We noticed that we had a lot of things in common and good times. As well as she liked my music. as she is preparing a play of Shakespeare, well, I think D.B. would fit. As well, meanwhile I wrote a song for a Spanish Fetish designer m(FF) which will be used on his next catwalk at the "Torture Garden". So, as you might see, I am very much interested to work also outside the so called "scene". It's always a new experience.

In passing anything else you would like to add? No.



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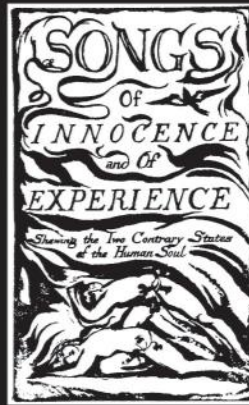
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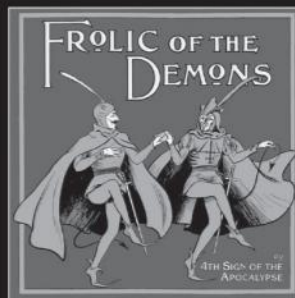
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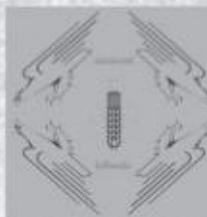
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DREAM INTO DUST

For a short introduction, DREAM INTO DUST are one of the best American exponents of dark evocative music. Spanning genres of industrial, neo-classical & neo-folk (to name but a few), DREAM INTO DUST are none of these individually yet taking parts of each to create a highly original and distinctive sonic tapestry. Derek Rush the creator and driving force behind the group (not withstanding collaborative input by close friends) answered some of my queries via e-mail in the middle of 2000....

What was your musical journey that led to your interest in and ultimate recording within an underground culture of obscure music? if you want to start at the very root of things, there was an old upright piano in my parents' house which i abused horribly as a child. i would bang on it, hold the sustain pedal down with books, and open up the front to play the strings with kitchen utensils. i composed and later recorded short pieces in near-total naiveté, since the only music which was played in the house was classical on a tinny-sounding radio or ancient record player. then there was "music class" in school, which made no sense to me. to me, written music has always been about as inspiring and understandable as calculus. this drove me away from music for years and i pursued visual arts. i slowly got back into music_ once the visual side became restrictive in itself. by the time i went to art school i was constantly taking my breaks in the piano rooms. i re-taught myself music from a standpoint of different types of chords, and timbres of sound, as opposed to scales and keys. i learned a few rules and broke them immediately if i thought they were stupid, and let the final judgement be whether or not it sounds good. by this time i'd been exposed to both mainstream and underground music. i thought there was just music that was easy to find and other music that was more obscure, but for me the difference became clear when trying to send demos to labels and managers. i realised how differently these people approached music, and how much they would influence and warp it to suit the needs of the current marketplace, and that they were unable to understand certain things about the artists and the audience. it made more sense to follow the underground culture i was exposed to in books like 'cassette mythos' and RE/SEARCH's 'industrial handbook'. not only was working in this way more feasible but more attractive to me as an artist. i'm not against commercial success but it should happen on the artist's own terms.

For a brief history DECEMBER was your first project (of subdued industrial gothic tinged songs) that was then laid to rest in favor of DREAM INTO DUST. In particular DREAM INTO DUST has progressively become more instrumental and neo-classical with each release. Has this been a conscious effort or an inevitable progression? not conscious at all. given the classical music in my background i'd say it's inevitable, even atavistic. i still can't get into most classical music because it doesn't sustain a mood or key long enough, or i dislike certain conductors or playing styles. but there are segments of it that are just amazing. those are the moments i try to capture and extend for a piece, or work into another context. i wouldn't describe what you said as a progression, at least not the final progression. i wouldn't be surprised if some elements from the older material began creeping

back in. i'm reluctant to classify it as "gothic" since that brings to mind a certain bass guitar-driven sound that we only briefly touched on with the "river of blood"/ "venus in chains" single. i like to think it was a unique take on that, and had other elements which point the way to other things. there's constant growth and change depending on what's necessary. there's a lot of variety if you're open to the numerous subgenres of dark music, but our work all stays

within a framework that defines the sound.

Do you personally consider DECEMBER to be the starting point for DREAM INTO DUST, or did the name change mark a total shift in attitude that ultimately required a new beginning? it's pretty much the same attitude and feelings in that they come from me, but my life was different then. when things changed, the stylistic shift was enough that the name change was appropriate. besides the fact that several other bands were using an exact or similar name, i think DREAM INTO DUST is more unique and personal, and not provoke as narrow or prejudiced a reaction. i probably should have picked it in the first place.

Having already indicated that you are increasingly working within the neo-classical genre, DREAM INTO DUST still have the ability to transcend mere categorizations of a particular style, drawing from numerous sources (folk, doom, gothic, industrial to name a few). Has this ever created compositional difficulties for you in which direction you pursued? (consciously or otherwise). i try to balance between letting the song go where it wants and trying to make sure it stays true to the sound i want to portray. a perfect example is "farwell to eden". it's almost entirely classical in arrangement, and the voice is very melodic. i really didn't want to go that far in that direction, since there was a possibility that track would be played separately and misrepresent us as a purely neoclassical band. but that's how it turned out. in the end i have to trust my feelings about it.

Although your music has a very European flavor, you actually live in New York (and what i'm sure is a very urbanised construct) I wouldn't think this would be an inspiring setting for the music you compose. Do you find your surroundings a hindrance to your creativity? new york would be wonderful if not for all the people. i try to exist at hours to come in contact with as few people as possible. that's not always an option. i'm not in an especially "urbanised" area, although it is getting worse all the time. i would say the negative aspects of the environment are inspiring in a sense. if i felt there were more interesting things to do, great people to go out and meet, i'd be out spending my time on that sort of thing. instead, there are more yuppies, corporations, and tourists than ever blundering around town, strip-mining each community and turning everything into a bastardized disneyland. so mostly i try to stay in the studio and work. there are other advantages though, so we'll stick it out here as long as we can.



Many people spout on how they would ultimately love to go live away from the majority of human contact etc, however what is your opinion on this? i think i foresee that in the future for myself. however you have to be careful not to become so cut off you aren't aware of what's going on, or you become unable to function around people because they're so alien to you. ingesting a little of this poisonous society at a time helps keep you immune to it.

What musical groups/ scenes, writers, philosophers have played a role in the shaping of DREAM INTO DUST as we see/ hear it today? there's always influences coming in from everywhere, but i do my best to weed out those not relevant to the band, and distill those that are. industrial, classical, dark metal, experimental, neo-folk are all represented in what we do. if something seems like it's leaning a bit too much towards a certain style i try to throw a spanner in the works that no one else would. that might sound like a hodgepodge, but it does seem to coagulate into something other than the sum of the parts. as for writers and philosophers, nietzsche, sartre, kundera, and perdurabo has all had influence as well as mirroring concepts i already had. everything is filtered through my perception though, the band is not following any doctrine, unless it is that of the individual.

Given the images you have used on your releases have a historic euro centric focus, what aspects of European history interest you the most? i wouldn't say history of any sort interests me per se. to me it's all just ideas, concepts, alternate ways of thinking and living than the bland and obvious path that's set in front of us from birth. i'm drawn to european culture as an aspiration to something higher than the crass generic american lifestyle. others would also say it's because some of my background is european - more atavism i suppose! perhaps a bit of both reasons. it's a part of me that i've been separated from and thus am attracted to as a result.

"Not above but apart" is a song title off your "the world we have lost CD. Can you detail how this if at all pertains to the overall philosophy of either yourself or the concept behind DREAM INTO DUST? i think the title is self-explanatory. i almost didn't feel the need to write any more words than that. it's a fitting end for the CD. given all the negative lyrics and the album title, one might think the finale would be blowing everything up, or claiming to be superior. instead you get, "not above but apart."

Likewise when exactly was our world lost? Is this a metaphor for loss of a certain mindset or referencing specific historic events? that depends on how you define the term "world". it could be the planet earth, a particular way of life, a "scene", a circle of friends, a certain time frame...the possibilities go on. like the name DREAM INTO DUST itself, it's loaded with multiple connotations for people to consider. i want people to think as well as listen to the music. even if they only get something years later - in fact when that happens to me, it makes me appreciate the piece more.

A sense of timeless nostalgia and sorrow permeates much of the atmosphere of the lyrics and music, but the photographic representation of your releases represents an era of past history (approximately the 1930-40's). Do the photos you have used reflect a deeper meaning other than for their aesthetic appearance? i became interested in war photography several years ago. the fact is, there was more film shot in WWII than any conflict ever before or since. so a lot of images are going to come from that. however the photos we've used have come from various wars since the late 1800's. it's not meant as an historical reference, or in support of any country or political party. it's to show the horror it can bring, and unfortunately, the sick and strange beauty the destruction can provide the photographers with. it's a reminder of how close we all are to that state, how fragile humans and our creations are. it's also a metaphor for the battles all of us fight every day with ourselves and the outside

world, and the feeling of desolation we can have after fighting for so long. however, after the 'no man's land' and 'the world we have lost' we're moving on to other types of images. the music and lyrics are about more than just those things.

You seem to be involved in a scene of ethereal/ folk noir groups centered in New York and increasingly solidifying around the MIDDLE PILLAR label. Is this a correct assessment or totally off the mark? it is somewhat correct in that we all know each other or are aware of each other. several people have switched bands over the past few years, or work with each other from time to time. at one time or another various bands have worked with MIDDLE PILLAR, either contributing to compilations, making distribution deals, or signing recording contracts. they're doing a great thing, but for the most part, the bands exist independently of each other and the label. MPP simply recognizes talent and know what to do with it — kudos to them for doing so. it should be mentioned that before MPP, there was an event called "a night of misanthropy" which bryin dall used to present, which did a lot towards helping a live dark music scene coalesce here in the 1990's.

Can you provide some detail into your involvement in your various side projects? (of which there are many!). well, speaking of bryin, he's the one i work with most of the time on other projects, although he contributes to DREAM INTO DUST as well sometimes. i first helped him on a country song a few years ago, which led to a remix of a track by his band LORETTA'S DOLL. since then i actually joined them, playing bass and other noises and mixing half the new album. meanwhile, he and i did an even noisier experimental/industrial project called OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN. i sometimes do mixes for his main project 4TH SIGN OF THE APOCALYPSE as well as the powerelectronics outfit URSUS NOIR. i helped on two tracks for THREE MAJESTY which he does with genesis p-orrige, as well as one track for THE SWORD VOLCANO COMPLEX album. recently we collaborated on a dark ambient project A MURDER OF ANGELS, and then applied some of the same techniques in postproduction to the first album by THE MIRROR REVEALS. we've started work on a full album of dark country songs. i still plan to do other things and work with more people, but bryin and i work well together and he's lives nearby! as enjoyable as those projects are, i'd like to slow things down in those areas for awhile and concentrate on DREAM INTO



DUST more.

ELFENBLUT were responsible to introducing DECEMBER to the masses and later bringing forth the debut DREAM INTO DUST CD. How did you get in contact with the label and are you satisfied with the results? as i mentioned before, my previous dealings with labels were frustrating at best, and i had given up on such a route and released the 'hope for nothing' cassette myself. it attracted some attention in the underground dark music press, and i was trading it with other artists' tape releases. one of these was ENDURA, who dubbed a copy for a friend at MISANTHROPY RECORDS, who liked it and wrote about working with us. they then started ELFENBLUT as a non-metal counterpart label to release AMBER ASYLUM, AIN SOPH, ENDURA, BLOOD AXIS, HAGALAZ' RUNEDANCE, DREAM INTO DUST, and others. they didn't actually release the debut 'no man's land' MCD which came out first due to a scheduling conflict at the time. they did come through with the release of 'the world we have lost' though, it came out exactly as i'd envisioned it. i'm satisfied with their efforts, however unfortunately they decided to fold because of the tedious side of the record business, even though their releases were very much respected and selling quite well. we were one of the last three releases and i believe we suffered a bit timing-wise because of that. no fault on their end, but there was a slight perception and profile problem because the label's closing was known, as well as some distribution problems, especially in germany.

Your other releases being in the form of a 7" and MCD were produced on your own label CHTHONIC STREAMS and I believe was originally started to release the 'No Mans Land' CD. What is the future plan for this label and how does DREAM INTO DUST fit into its continued vision? Do you prefer others to release your music or yourself apart from the obvious cost factor? in some ways i'd prefer to have others release DREAM INTO DUST, since i concentrate on so much of it, it takes the pressure off and gets some perspective to have someone else handle a few details. of course doing it all yourself means more control, so it's a tradeoff. the cost factor is a slight deterrent to releasing everything on CHTHONIC STREAMS. however, i'm very serious about releasing good music, so if i didn't believe in something i wouldn't put money into it. besides the MCD and "a prison for oneself" 7" you mentioned, there has also been the compilation 'on the brink of infinity', which came out at the end of 1999 and featured 12 artists' reflections on endings/beginnings/death/rebirth/cycles. i've already been speaking to a few other artists about releasing their material on CS, it's just a question of time and money.

What future items are currently in the workings, be those for DREAM INTO DUST or other projects and which labels are they destined to be released on? there will be another MURDER OF ANGELS album sometime in 2001. there's a great 4TH SIGN OF THE APOCALYPSE 2CD box set coming that i have some interesting mixes and a lot of artwork on, and by the end of 2000 COLD SPRING should be releasing the URSUS NOIR album, which i mixed over half of. LORETTA'S DOLL has completed the sixth album 'creeping sideways', which will hopefully be out on WORLD SERPENT by the time this is printed. there's a lot of compilations that DREAM INTO DUST has done tracks for. By now the following should have been released: WIDERSTAND (STATE-ART), interpretations of the title's meaning; TEN YEARS OF MADNESS (ACHTUNG BABY!), about socio-political changes through dark post industrial expression; SOL MAGAZINE #3, by tony wakeford. coming soon should be SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE (SUFFERING CLOWN), musical recordings of the william blake books. we're winding down on these projects and preparing for the next DREAM INTO DUST release. it will be a 7" picture disc dealing with the holiday season, religion, and related issues, that will be out in december 2000.

As you prepare design artwork for your own label/ releases and for other labels such as MIDDLE PILLAR, is this something you have trained in and is this your career as such that allows you to finance your other endeavours? that's the way it is at the moment. the covers and ads are only part of it, i do a lot of freelance design and layout which helps fund the creation of music and the inherent expenses of that. the mailorder and label sales help a bit as well, but none of it is making me rich.

Last comments? thank you for the interview, richard. keep up the great work on SPECTRUM. DREAM INTO DUST MP3s can be heard at <http://www.mp3.com/dreamintodust> CHTHONIC STREAMS website: <http://www.chthonicstreams.com> mailing address: PO BOX 7003, NEW YORK, NY 10116-7003 USA

(NOTE: photos of derek rush by dawn of the dead. all other images by derek rush)



DEATH IN JUNE

Although Ikon were the headlining act with Death in June as the special guest, admittedly I was really there to see the later rather than the former. However, mentioning the headline act first off, while Ikon are not of a genre I normally frequent, I can appreciate that they are solid performers at what they do. Basically they play (heavy) uptempo gothic rock - instrumentation ranging from electric to acoustic guitars, bass & drum rhythm section and the occasional keyboard/ programmed backing track. Ikon playing for around an hour, the set included mostly originals, but the audience was treated to their stunning uptempo version of Death in June's 'Fall Apart' for this special occasion. Further reviewing the night in rewind, the gig was held at the Esplanade Hotel (affectionately referred to as the Espy) being an icon (not Ikon..?!) of the Melbourne pub/ band circuit. Having the Death in June gig billed as "unplugged" I assumed this would mean the attendance of Douglas P and John Murphy only, as it was likely that Albin Julius still over in Austria. In short this assumption turned out to be correct.

While the stage setup of this show was less visually impressive than the one the previous year at Chasers Nightclub in Melbourne, I guess this time there was less equipment required, complicated with more stage area to deal with. Nonetheless it contained the obligatory DI6 symbol banners strategically draped to the front and rear of the stage, also covering the standing floor tom off to the side (also flanked by chimes, snare and symbol).

On the call of the shrill squeals of pigs and braying donkeys (intro to 'Ku Ku Ku'), Douglas

Show Report: 24th May, 2000 Melbourne/ AUSTRALIA

and John entered the stage at approximately 9:50 pm. Both were clad in full camouflage army garb, with John wearing a full leather fetish mask and Douglas shunning the trademark clay face mask, opting for an army helmet with rope camouflage attached to the front. This ensured both individuals' faces were fully obscured, resulting in a faceless performance and reflected the ethos of Douglas not being interested in any form of rock star status. This entry and subsequent rendition of 'Ku Ku Ku' saw a number of camera wielding people rush the front stage to immortalise the moment (me being one of them)- with the camera flashes being somewhat symbolic of night time warfare explosions.

Straight away it was evident that the sound was much more powerful than I anticipated, and that even when armed only with an acoustic guitar, mournful vocals and a minimalist standing percussion setup, the overall power and subdued martial sentiments were not forsaken, particularly enhanced via expertly executed pounded rhythms.

Due to the acoustic format unfortunately we would not be treated to any live renditions of the more industrial/ neo classical sounds on the last two albums, thus the set list revolved mostly around the mid eira of Death in June particularly the apocalyptic acoustic folk sound. The overall atmosphere of tragedy and despair that permeates Death in June's live offerings was certainly felt through lyrics such as "to love is to loose and to loose is to die" off 'Fall Apart' and "Europa has burned and will burn again" off 'Giddy Giddy Carousel'. For myself one of the highlights was the inclusion of 'Kameradshaf' which lost nothing in the delivery, despite lacking the programmed backing. The set list likewise included live versions of 'Of Runes and Men', 'But What ends when the Symbols Shatter?', 'Leper Lord' and others which escape me at the moment (much akin to the quickly escaping aura of DI6 at the conclusion of a performance). Being on stage for only a brief time, the 30-40 minutes passed all but too quickly - but I guess a glimpse is better than no vision at all...

Talking with John Murphy after the show it seems that later in the year after overseas shows are dispensed with, Death in June may be back in full entourage with Albin for further shows. I certainly hope this occurs as I really would like to see how the new tracks off 'Operation Hummingbird' translate to the live medium.

(Words, live photographs & background image by: Richardt Stevenson).



LAW

Having only been introduced to the power of LAW in mid 1999, I must say I quickly became a devotee to the abrasive yet intelligent sound/ noise-scapes. The corrosive anger & smouldering contempt of sole member Mitchell Altum has now manifested itself in his response to my interrogation undertaken during mid 2000.

Can you give a summation of the history of LAW and the recorded output thus far? I decided to attempt creating my own audio at the beginning of 1993, and within a few months my partner of the time and I had a very basic studio set-up. Within one year Law's first release was completed. Here is a brief LAW discography: + MALEDICTION - Self-released in 1994, this was the first sonic declaration of Law. + OKTAGON - Law had three new pieces on this double-LP compilation put out in 1995 by Germany's ANT-ZEN. Oktagon was specially packaged, and pressed on red vinyl. + NUCLEAR ASSAULT - Released in early '96 by Art Konkret in Germany, this specially packaged (housed in a sealed metal canister) tape comp. featured one new Law track. + PARIAS AMONG OUTCASTS - From 1996, this full length album was released by ANT-ZEN, and held within a special 12"x12" booklet made up of intense artwork, photos and text. + WAR AGAINST SOCIETY - An ambitious three LP compilation put out in 1997 by Germany's Praxis Dr. Bearmann, and containing an album's side worth of new work from Law. + WADING KNEE-DEEP IN YOUR BLOOD - Full length album from 1999 on Italy's Old Europa Cafe. Pressed on red vinyl and packaged in an elaborate four panel folder. + VINDICATION AND CONTEMPT - Released in January of 2000 via Triumvirate, this material marked the first appearance of Law on compact disc. + OUR LIFE THROUGH YOUR DEATH - This long-delayed title (completed in 1996) will finally be detonated in autumn 2000 by Triumvirate. A CD of diverse audio tactics and blast patterns. + THE BLACK LODGE - The final material to be released under the banner of "LAW", this CD will be housed in an elaborate folding package and released at the very end of 2000 by France's Nuit et Brouillard.

In the past year or so LAW have really made quite an impact with the LP on OEC and your CD debut incidentally on your own label, but when the recordings are scrutinised they both date back to 1997. What if any current recordings have or are you working on and likewise what was the reason for the delays of all said items? The recording of "The Black Lodge" was finished in autumn 1998. I'm currently collecting and programming the vast array of samples and sounds needed to construct the next full length block of material, which should be ready in the first part of 2001. To fully program, compose, record and mix a new Law work can take from 12 to 18 months. After my work is completed, in the past I had to begin the process of finding and securing a label to produce and distribute the material. Once a release agreement could be made, there was the wait as the label had the title manufactured, then fit it into their release schedule. In some instances, release dates had to be repeatedly pushed back by the labels for their own reasons — which I'm often not aware of until after the fact. "Vindication and Contempt" was finalized at the end of '97, but it wasn't until fall 1999 (after declining a few release offers for the work from various labels) that my partners and I decided to make it the debut Triumvirate CD. I programmed the packaging artwork, had the audio mastered, and secured a production facility all within the next few months. The disc was unveiled January 2000. I've come to the conclusion that all future audio works will be released either through Triumvirate, or solely by myself, without being within the structure of a "label".

How has your involvement in the underground scene eventuated and at what point did you think you had something to offer in the way of a power electronics project? Actually — not to be picky or oversensitive about genre labels, because it doesn't concern me that much — I don't think LAW has much of *anything* to offer the power electronics field. I personally don't consider my sonic output to be in that realm, and I'm sure most fans of power electronics wouldn't either. That said, I wouldn't have originally attempted creating my own music if I hadn't felt I could do a justifiable job of it, and the initial, strongly favourable reception from many quarters of the "Malediction" cassette helped affirm my convictions.

Working within the broad confines of abrasive noise there always contains a level of focused direction. What musical compositional background do you have? No formal or classical training. However, I began actively listening to music and seeking out unconventional styles and artists in the late 70s, and always tried to recognize what sound techniques worked to create a certain mood or effect. Almost as importantly, I came to realize what methods were overused clichés and cheap tricks. When I decided to create my own music I tried incorporating some of the techniques I understood into Law, and made every effort to avoid the mistakes of groups or artists in my general field.

What is the basic concept of constructing/ composing LAW tracks and how has your equipment altered over time? I often let the raw, unstructured sounds and samples partially dictate the form and composition of an individual piece. I have eight digital tracks at my disposal, plus numerous "virtual" ones via the sampler and midi techniques, so when it's appropriate to the song I often try filling all available parts of the sonic spectrum to give the audio a dense, heavily layered impact. I usually sketch out a kind of "schematic" for the structure of the track, plotting start and end points, duration, levels, etc., for each separate element, all in an effort to build the piece into a purposeful sonic journey, rather than a random collection of sounds or drifting haze of meandering improvisation. When LAW started back in 1993 the core equipment was an 80s-era sampler, a basic drum machine, a multi-effects processor, a compact mixer, a four-track analog cassette recorder, and a DAT recorder. Whenever finances have permitted over the years I've upgraded each piece of gear, and added a small number of new ones. Right now I have a rudimentary, yet fully functioning digital "studio". I still haven't made the shift into computer based synthesis and recording, and don't think I will anytime soon.

What music encompasses your listening time and to what you may find inspirational for LAW. Likewise what sources of literature and motion pictures have you found merit in if not taken inspiration from? I listen to a broad range of musical styles, and the dark ambient/hard electronics genres make up only a portion of my interests. Music that is unique, powerful, and evocative is what inspires me to try to bring the same qualities to my own work. Part of my motivation for being involved in Triumvirate lies in the fact that music at it's best has a power beyond just notes and melodies to inspire and energize, or to act as a catharsis and refuge. Triumvirate can act as a conduit for bringing a small fraction more of such music to a larger audience. I look for similar characteris-

tics in films and literature — works that are thought provoking, effective, that temporarily draw you into their reality and force you to consider what you would do if faced with their scenarios.

The liner note of “Vindication and Contempt” contains a scathing reference to “two-bit hobbyists and delusional tinkerers”. Is this aimed at anyone in particular or a general statement to the experimental scene? No, it’s not an indictment of any one artist or even the larger scene, but instead a reference to and dismissal of a general category of losers attempting to live out some sorry fantasy that they have anything meaningful to contribute to the world of music. Let me preface any further comments by saying that I DO NOT claim to be making the best dark electronic music in the field — I’m rarely entirely satisfied with Law, and there is an endless road of improvement to travel down. However, with high power sound equipment, recording gear, and CD-R burners affordable to virtually all above the lowest economic classes, in recent years there has been a sickening, sludge-like flood of utterly worthless, unoriginal, talent less “releases” sloshing over the landscape. This goes across nearly every genre, but is especially prevalent in the electronically dominated styles, particularly where one or two people can do everything from calling up factory pre-programmed drum loop #B17 on the affordable keyboard, to slapping the crappy label fresh out of their inkjet printer onto the face of a 75¢ CD-R. It takes more than an obligatory website or a flaccid performance at a local teen dance club to be a legitimate audio label or group/performer. Many people who think they’re going to make it big by mailing out a few demo CDs and getting “signed” by ***A RECORD LABEL***, or impress their obsessive record collector friends with the sleek new synthesizer plugged into the back of their Radio Shack stereo would be well served to pull two or three discs from their own collections by their favourite artists working in genres remotely similar to what they think they’re going to do. If after seriously, objectively comparing the output from those established artists with their own, they can truly say that their work holds up (and most of them will *still* be kidding themselves), then there’s justification to proceed.

Likewise the statement “All hail mini-van-Wal-Mart-America” is used for sarcastic effect, however does this reflect the surroundings you live in? Middle class, middle America (as with many Western countries) is populated by a soulless citizenry whose highest aspirations include finally making the last payment on their rusty, five year old mini vans, breeding miniature replicas of themselves with spouses they can barely put up with — and have long ago lost all passion for, and occupying the dead hours between the job and the television with all-consuming pilgrimages down to the local mega-warehouse discount chain store to purchase useless goods they can’t really afford. The sight, sound, smell, and very IDEA of them is a perpetual mental drain and source of disgust.

With your reference to the American Middle Class above, where would you place yourself in the class scale of American Economic Society? (If America is anything like Australia, the middle class is being marginalised and being replaced by a smaller grouping of upper class and burgeoning mass of a poor underclass). I’d say my income would place me in the lower-middle class of the American economic structure. However, since to date I’ve done a fairly good job of avoiding the worst socio-economic traps most people fall into, my money goes farther. First and foremost, I do not have children, and will never father or raise offspring. There’s no demanding wife, expecting to live an illusional life of convenience and comfort beyond our financial means. I don’t have a lease on a ridiculous sport utility vehicle or high end Japanese sports car, so there are no crushing monthly car payments for me. I’d prefer a larger dwelling, but I always strive to keep the rent for my living quarters in line with what I can realistically afford. I don’t fill my small domicile or drain my wallet with worthless, overpriced consumer goods.

Have you read ‘the Redneck Manifesto’ by Jim Goad? What are your opinions of this publication and would you display any sort of affinity to the portrayal of this class of American (particularly since Jim states he feels closest to the ‘redneck’ than any other societal group). Yes, I’ve read the book. Goad is often an entertaining author, and this work was well written and accurate for the most part. The last few chapters seem to be on the verge of filler, Goad having already made his point, and perhaps needing enough additional words to bring the book up to full length. No, I don’t identify with the “redneck” class — they’re ignorant, self-defeating, and intolerable for the most part. With each additional year I find myself farther removed from all the classes and subcultures around me. I didn’t name the Law album “Pariahs Among Outcasts” solely because I like the way those words sound.

Certain lyrics seems to convey a level of regret and discontent. Do you have regret and not necessarily in relation to LAW? Naturally I regret actions I’ve taken, and things I *haven’t* done in my life, but I don’t try to express those thoughts in the music. At most, I might be in that general frame of mind when programming or recording a given passage or song, and some of that mood might be reflected in part of the music.

What is the law of LAW as you see it? No dogmatic or overblown laws for public consumption or adherence. Instead, “Law” refers more to my personal values, principles, guidelines and goals. I attempt to live life as a unified whole, using the same principles and judgments whenever possible in all situations. Not necessarily a world of only black and white circumstances and decisions, but rather ideally one comprised of very dark grays and very light grays, where I strive to push everything as far as possible towards one end of the spectrum or the other. The few things that fall in between make up acceptable compromises, and sometimes, for brief periods, balance is achieved.

Image hasn’t seemed to be a huge factor in the representation of LAW (except for the obscured image in the War Against Society set & Wading Knee Deep..LP), but then again no image can be just as constraining? Thoughts? I don’t expend all this time and energy constructing audio so I can get my face plastered in magazine articles or advertisements, or my name endlessly dropped and jabbered about among hordes of online dimwits. My personal appearance has nothing to do with the music I create, so my image has not, and never will be featured on any of my releases.

In much of what you say (or at least how you come across in e-mail) you are a forthright person who likes to “tell it like it is”. Now a trait of certain genres (particularly metal) is that people will put forward an image via an interview but resemble little of what they portray in real life. What is your opinion of this and how does this relate if at all to LAW? I’m not a talent less, insecure cunt who starves herself for two weeks just to squeeze into a leather jumpsuit for the big photo shoot, or a pudgy, middle-aged computer nerd trying to convince listeners I’m as “dark” and “dangerous” as the image of the music I’m slapping together, so I don’t need to construct some stage persona or artificial mystique. I live my life, pursue my interests and goals, and create the type of music that appeals to me. Whether observers find my tastes and activities “controversial” and “extreme”, or boring and just disagreeable is irrelevant to me. Long ago I realized it’s far easier and satisfying to simply speak the blunt truth whenever possible, regardless of possible hurt feelings or perceived unfriendliness. Over the years a number of people have told me that the way I speak, act, write and dress, both privately and publicly, all seem to mesh together naturally, with no pretension or artifice on my part.

In one interview of yours I read, you stated you planned to drop the moniker ‘Law’ after the release of an upcoming album ‘The Black Lodge’. Exactly why would you choose to do this and would the name change likely see a change in musical direction? I’ve been working as “Law” for seven years, and while the inspirations and references that lead me to chose that title are still important to me, the word itself as a creative shell has become less important. I’ve even considered just using “Mitchell Altum” as the identifier for the music, but I guess I still fall prey somewhat to the aesthetic appeal of one ambiguous word to act as a creative edifice. That, and using something other than my own name also reinforces my belief that the music is more important than my personality. The

name change will not have any direct effect on the nature of the audio.

What to make of the distinction of living in the heart of the most decadent nation to ever exist? Would you prefer to live elsewhere if given the opportunity? I've never lived in another country, so I don't have any direct comparisons to make. I'd certainly be interested in traveling through many other nations and geographic regions, but even as bad as much of American culture and society is, it's still far better than much of the rest of the world. Let's pause for a moment while non-American readers swear and clench the sides of the magazine with indignation... I'd say that virtually ANY part of the world would be more liveable if it were massively depopulated. As much as I dislike the cold, from time to time I've thought it might be interesting to live for a short while in Antarctica.

Given that America does not have a mandatory voting system such as the one in place here in Australia do you choose to vote in your 'democratic' election process? For the past few years, only when there has been a worthwhile Libertarian candidate on the ballot. Mandatory voting — there's real liberty and "democracy" in action for you. Just as blatant censorship and confiscation of private property represent modern democracy in Germany, and the decimation of "civil liberties" in the name of the "War on Drugs" and "safety of the children" qualify as democracy in the United States.

Triumvirate is your own label and obviously contains the input of two other individuals. Who is the triad forming the label and how are responsibilities for production allocated? Likewise how far do you plan to take the label and what are the planned outputs? Eric D. and Erica Hoffman are my two partners in this endeavour. I handle most of the technical audio and visual details involved in constructing a release. I brought my base of contacts and first hand experience acquired during working in this field for seven years to the label, and do a great deal of the networking for promotion and distribution involved. Eric & Erica bring their business acumen and experience to the effort, having run their own small, successful business in the past. Eric tends to be more adept at friendly social interaction than I am, so he often handles most of the direct or phone contact needed with potential artists and distributors. He also supplies most of the ammunition and mind enhancing chemicals. Erica is skilled at running the numbers and keeping the books, so she usually tends to keep the records and bills straight. She's also in charge of constructing the Triumvirate website. We all review audio submissions, and there's some amount of overlapping of duties in general. As long as there's enough interest and support generated by the listeners of unorthodox, obscure music to keep us from sinking into bankruptcy, we'll continue. This issue of "Spectrum" is slated for publication just as Law's "Our Life Through Your Death" CD will be hitting the market. We have four other releases in varying degrees of readiness scheduled from autumn 2000 through early 2001, but since I'm writing this in summer of '00, I prefer not to go into detail since those items are not yet cast in stone. Fact and action over hype and empty promises...

Lastly for those who have not heard any of your output why should someone listen to LAW? Someone should listen to Law if they're interested in having their expectations challenged, and are willing to actively absorb unsettling music. They should listen to Law if they're tired of aimless, thoughtless electronics. Someone should listen because I TELL THEM to listen...

LAW • TRIUMVIRATE, triumvirate@datacruz.com, P.O. Box 6254, South Bend, IN, 46660 USA



KK NULL / MOZ

"A Split Release" CD • CM007 - \$11(us) \$13(wld)

KK Null presents five new tracks of frenetic electronics and rhythmic experiments, ranging from cacophonous to an almost tribal atmosphere. Ever evolving within a sphere of obscure tension the details reveal themselves with a stalwart elegance. Moz delivers 6 tracks of socially introspective Death Industrial and Dark Ambient. Drifting slabs contrast sharply with vitriolic sonics to render this misshapen pillar of sobering electronics. Limited to 500 copies.

DEISON

"Dirty Blind Vortex" CD • CM006 - \$11(us) \$13(wld)

A fuming miasma of desiccated frequencies and oppressive atmospheres from this Italian purveyor of Death Industrial & Dark Ambient. "Dirty Blind Vortex" is a cryptic snarl of emotion and obsession, impulse and lethargy. Features contributions from Sshe Retina Stimulants, Govt. Alpha, Baal, R.H.Y. Yau, Lasse Marhaug and more. Limited to 500



LEFTHANDEDDECISION

"Instinct & Emotion" CD • CM005 - \$11(us) \$13(wld)

"Instinct & Emotion" is a guttural deluge of constrictive Heavy Electronics, thick, grinding sonics & acidic vocals, that maintains an underlying subtle darkness beneath it all. A monolith of contemptuous, and unforgiving Noise... Limited to 496 copies.

GRUNTSPLATTER/SLOWVENT

"Split Release" CD • CM003 - \$11(us) \$13(wld)

Gruntsplatter provide 30 minutes of grim Noise Ambient and darkened isolationist textures. Rich with subtlety and introspective horror. Slowvent supply 30 minutes of viscous Death Industrial. Thick, low end electronics, sluggish rhythmic distortions and subterranean atmospheres. This release is limited to 500 copies.



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stateart

In the relative short amount of time that STATEART has been in operation as a record label, it has gained a healthy level of notoriety & respect in amongst 'those in the know' of the general industrial underground. I am more than pleased to further assist in raising the profile of this very worthwhile label by featuring this interview with label boss Marco Koch...

Can you give some details about personal status and the path you travelled that eventuated in your involvement in subversive music cultures? By being a subversive nature myself, I've always felt a certain tendency for the "extreme". Since my early youth I received musical influences that ranged from 80's Pop, over Punk and all extremes in Metal music, until I finally found the phenomenon of Industrial music. I've definitely not taken the "classical way" to my discovery, the prime of THROBBING GRISTLE or SPK was long since gone in the early 90's and I was young, as I'm still not too old. In the meantime, my personal musical taste has evolved a lot... The extremity is not anymore of great importance to me, rather the explicit expression and transmission of ideas through music. Thus I can confess, even a good Pop record or songs from ADRIANO CELENTANO are able to ennoble my day, because they radiate a lot more honesty than most of these evil clowns...

STATEART have become quite a cult label over a short amount of time. What exactly made you decide to start a record label? Thank you for the ascertainment of STATEART being a cult label. Of course I'm satisfied with the status we reached within barely 4 years, although I wouldn't overrate the same. I decided to start a record label with my first recordings under the name IDPA and close contact to the individual behind THOROFON, who was part of the clan until the release of his "Littleton" project, as well as my general plans to become active as a label. This is, in short, my former motivation to start with STATEART.

Have your early aspirations for the label changed and thus far have you achieved what you initially aimed for? Where do you want to take the label in future projects? I consider STATEART as some kind of independent „organism“ and after all I've achieved a lot more than I was able to dream four years ago. My early aspirations for the label have changed drastically. At the beginning there was only our desire to release and work with the music we liked, but the guidelines that take our struggle ahead are now far different from what we've done before. Music as bearer of ideas and alternative influences is an important key point for our present and future work. Where STATEART has just been one amongst several other Post-Industrial oriented labels worldwide, we'll now take a rather personal and different direction. Music, as bearer of ideas, is a tool that has to be formed. Industrial music, at the other hand, rather became a dogma that tells us, how the music has to be shaped to become successful within a scene, where a certain narrow-mindedness unfortunately is the daily order. Where is the revolutionary spirit of Industrial music today? There's not much more left than a subculture copy of any equal mainstream culture. And this takes us to the point of where I want to take the label in future projects... At the moment we're trying to give our "New Guidelines! A New Path! NEUE MUSIK!" profile a living form. NEUE MUSIK (New Music) doesn't mean we're striving to create something generally new and never seen before. That is almost impossible to plot out of the ground and it will lead to a blindness towards the truly important aspects within our concept! Of course we're trying to see STATEART as a family of musicians, who are sophisticated and innovative. NEUE MUSIK generally is a powerful synonym for "consequent music". I don't know where STATEART will walk in the future, if the label will some day disappear from the surface or if we grow... For now I'm trying to organize my work in a clearly arranged manner. With certainty, the only functional dictatorship STATEART won't remain a one man dictatorship any longer and I'm planning to give away competence to some of my closest friends, concerning organization, design and propagandistic work.

STATEART have released items from what could be considered the elite of industrial noise/power electronics and neo-classical artists. Did you personally know any of the groups prior to starting the label and if not, was it difficult to make the contact and convince the groups you have worked with of your serious intentions with STATEART? Yes, I've known some of the groups prior to starting the label. The scene is rather meager and to keep it functional and active, flowing contacts are a necessity! It has never been difficult to establish contacts, nor was it necessary to convince anyone to be part of the STATEART history. "Natural Order" was, in the case of talking about an "elite", a maximum of concentrated popular artists. I'm very proud with the fact that it was possible to win the trust of everyone and I hope there has never been a disappointment between the groups and STATEART. It's not anymore of importance to profile our work with "big" names. We have and always had a very close and friendly relation to all groups we've worked with so far, except for a few who represent an exception. The most interesting part of my work with STATEART has always been the support of newcomer groups with intense profile and aim.

Is provocation on the agenda for STATEART as an entity partially with the label title, advertisements you have run and the content of selected items released? As previously said, provocation is not anymore one of my principal concerns! Of course we use provocation on different aspects, especially if the concerned project demands the use of a good portion of flogging... The agenda of STATEART is to be as explicit as it gets and as effective as it gets! Radical and constructive!

I remember you telling me that you consider all advertising of STATEART to be propaganda. Can you expand on this statement? Yes indeed, you remember correctly... Advertising is propaganda! There's no difference, except the economical and political terminology. And because of the fact that STATEART is more than just a common music label, we don't want to propagandize our products, we propagandize our view! And even if we propagandize a product, it's not more than propagandizing propaganda itself... Propaganda is nothing negative, but radical! Propaganda is a monologue and only one side of the coin. To view the other side, people have to look behind the curtain. STATEART propaganda is an order to think!

What does an artist/project have to offer for you to sign them to your label and of all of the releases you have produced thus far. What has been the most successful and in comparison what has been your favourite? The most successful release, considered from the sales angle, certainly was the ALLERSEELEN/BLOOD AXIS 7". In opposite, my personal favourite so far is "Sad Finger" by COLUMN ONE, a lovely piece of music and explicit in expression. You see, the character of STATEART itself is different from what one could expect. I already said before, our work is comparable to an organism, STATEART is a continual development. Therefore our present profile is far different from what we've done in the past. I'm still very satisfied with all releases, which were satisfactory at their time. But we look ahead and not even I know which point STATEART has reached after the next four years! What an artist/project has to offer me...? First of all, a friendship! A close relationship to all who I consider being a part of the family is first priority. The artistic expression does it's own... A convincing concept and music, worth to be part of STATEART's aims and demands! In fact, it's a difficult composition of different factors.

I hear the political system in Germany allows little room for alternative political ideas and subversive subject matter. As I would class STATEART as releasing many items of 'difficult' subject matter, have you had any issues with the authorities, CD pressing plants, printing companies etc? Don't all existing political systems have this effect in one or another similar way? We haven't had any problems with authorities, pressing plants or printing companies yet... This fact could be analyzed from two different viewpoints: We're either too subtle for anyone to recognize our subversive potential, or we're simply not subversive enough to be taken serious by the authorities... Both versions have no effect on the progress



of our work. STATEART has found it's true destination for the future. Where we could have been classified as merely a music label so far, STATEART does more and more become a cultural movement of explicit utterance! The family consists of people who follow a serious vision and music has always been the inner expression of mankind, even if the modern mainstream model of "music" can't be considered as that. Further on, STATEART doesn't only focus on musical basics in the future. The written word, picture and film are effective forms of expression as well! At last we leave the classification of our work being part of the addressee. He's the individual from whom we think he's able to form a clean and sophisticated perception, and he's the one who finally decides to reflect upon our work or declares to be our enemy...

I believe that there was some certain incidents involved surrounding your release of a split BLOOD AXIS 7" and their tour of your part of the globe. Can you elaborate on this? Boring old stories! Honestly I don't want to comment on this, to not show these idiots too much attention concerning their silly actions... I hope this is acceptable for you!?

STATEART has recently moved into the forum of organizing a live festival, this being the COLLAPSE Festival of 18th & 19th of August this year. Is this something you are simply assisting in or coordinating this entirety by yourself? The COLLAPSE festival was and is a collaborative work between STATEART and ARS MACABRE, a shop, mail-order service and further a label, located in Rostock (Germany). We coordinated everything together, due to our contacts and skills. The audience was a bit disappointing this year, we expected many more people to come and see this exclusive line-up. None the less, we're going to continue with our COLLAPSE festival series next year and hope this could be held at the MS Stubnitz again, an unique place for this event, and possibly in Rotterdam (Netherlands), where the ship is located and invited in occasion of the "Kulturhauptstadt Europas" (cultural capital of Europe) event during that time next year. This will of course demand a lot more stress and effort from ourselves, but we hope to reach a lot more and hopefully different people than the typical uniformed German audience.

Who is playing and do you anticipate recording any of the live performances for future release? We were trying to find an exciting as well as exclusive selection of bands: ULTRA UNITED (Switzerland), NOCTURNE (France), MZ.412 vs. FOLKSTORM (Sweden), AXON NEURON/VAGWA (Germany), EX.ORDER (Germany) and PREDOMINANCE (Germany). All bands are either close to STATEART or share a good friendship with us. A performance of HEID was also planned, to which I refer later on, that we had to replace, what finally lead to a spontaneous live collaboration between COLUMN ONE, MZ.412 and me as WHITE. The entire festival (except for EX.ORDER and PREDOMINANCE, who technically needed the TV monitors for their own films) was professionally filmed and recorded on DAT, but at the moment we don't know if a retrospective as release on video or CD is possible or necessary, since we haven't seen all filmed material yet. Of course it'd be a nice offer to everyone who haven't had the chance to attend to our first COLLAPSE. So far I've heard my personal mixers cut of the COLUMN ONE – MZ.412 – WHITE performance, which sounds really interesting and worth to be released. I'm now awaiting the reactions of COLUMN ONE and MZ.412, maybe I'm going to remix the recording together with COLUMN ONE...

As with many underground label owners they have music project to release their own sound works. I am aware you have a couple of not so known projects on the go and I also heard that you recently became a member of the newish project HEID. Can you divulge some information on your recording projects and also to you perceive problems being a member of HEID considering K. Olsson is a resident of Sweden? Well, in the past I've worked on a solid musical project called İDPA, from which a split 7" with THOROFON and a complete 7" called "Stream" were released via STATEART, plus one track for AVA/ES1's compilation CD "Lunar Blood Rituals" and a contribution of about 2 minutes length to MILITIA's not too old "The Black Flag Hoisted" 2CD (TACTICAL RECORDS). I'm not anymore active as İDPA, yet the project hasn't died – it's "on ice"... Currently I'm working under the name WHITE, which I don't consider as a solid project in the common sense. In September 1999 I absolved a live performance with exclusively recorded material at the 3rd BRAINATTACK Festival in Rostock, organized by our friend Frank of ARS MACABRE. A German 2CD compilation called "Immortal Legends" (ARBORLON MUSIC) is featuring the first ever released track of WHITE. At the moment I consider WHITE as a collaborative project, i.e. it's only appearing as such in cooperation with other artists. In this sense I performed together with COLUMN ONE and MZ.412 during our COLLAPSE festival. Future collaborations are planned, but nothing is fixed yet.

Concerning HEID... K. Olsson is one of the closest comrades to STATEART and during the time of being in contact we found many views that we share, as well as the method of working in musical and aesthetic aspects. Finally the idea of working for HEID together came up and we both were fascinated from the idea of working together on such a long distance. There are no audible results yet, except for the track "Grundgeweiht", which is featured on our COLLAPSE festival CD, for which I submitted him raw sound material. The German live performance of HEID during our festival was actually planned to be the very first real sound collaboration between K. Olsson and me for HEID, but unfortunately private reasons prevent him to play and we cancelled the show. None the less, another opportunity is planned for a show in Berlin next year, but here also nothing is fixed as well. I don't see any problems being a member of HEID, because the work in distance is leading to new and exciting, not at least to innovative aspects concerning the music of HEID. We both have the chance to record new material for our own or together, either with raw sound material from the other part, or simply with own material. Then we're presenting the result to the other part and decide then if it's good enough to be released or not. Also the possibility of doing remastered and remixed versions of the other member's material is an exciting method of working. STATEART is going to re-release the first album of HEID, which was released as a CD-R limited to 200 copies via BASTED RECORDS. We both consider this album as being released in a very unsatisfactory way, the artwork was changed to something very terrible and also the sound quality suffered due to an obvious remastering. However, the re-release (probably as LP format) will certainly contain one bonus track and maybe we're going to remix the entire sound material.

What upcoming items can we expect to surface from the STATEART in the immediate future? At the moment we work on the two next items, the first full length CD of NOCTURNE called "Kapitulation", COLUMN ONE's "World Transmission 3 & 4" 2LP set and the first CD "Ultra Audience" from ULTRA UNITED. There are further things planned, such as the long awaited 2CD compilation "Widerstand", releases by SRP, DREAM INTO DUST, GENITOR LVMINIS, SURVIVAL UNIT and more... Too many rumors and uncontrolled information in the past convinced me to be careful with information concerning the future. Details shall be unleashed in time!

Last comments? Nothing of personal concern – all is said, more can be said... Thank you, Richard, for this interview and all time good luck with your work for Spectrum, a promising magazine!

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Discography:

SA001: İdpa/Thorofon – Split 7", SA002: Profane Grace - ...In Death's Silent Embrace... 7", SA003: Ex.Order/Predominance – Split 7", SA004: A Swarm Of Locusts/No Festival Of Light – Split 7", SA005: İdpa – Stream 7", SA006: Thorofon – Maximum Punishment Solutions LP, SA-P1: Various Artists – Natural Order 2LP Box, SA007: FirŞt Law – Revelation 5:2 MCD, SA008. Drape Excrement/Söldnergeist – Split 7", SA009: Allerseele/Blood Axis – Split 7", SA010: Column One – Unrealizer LP, SA011: I Burn – Ipertermia 10", SA012: Lamia Is – Flesharvest 10", SA013: Genitor Lvminis – Deam Adessa 10", SA014: Profane Grace – Ages In Dust CD-R, SA015: Thorofon – Littleton 7", SA016: Various Artists – How Terrorists Kill CD, SA017: Column One – Sad Finger 7", SA018: Cyclotimia – New Death Order MCD, SA019: PPF – Propagande Par Le Fait LP.



Desiderii Marginis

(close your eyes and die a little.....)



After raving about Desiderii Marginis's debut album 'songs over ruins' way back in issue 1#, out of the blue Johan Levin (the single member of the project) got in contact to see if I would mind the utilisation of the review on his web page. Not only did I not mind, I likewise jumped at the opportunity to interview his project. This could not have come at a better time considering a new album entitled 'deadbeat' had been recorded and recently submitted to Cold Meat Industry for imminent release. Certainly not being able to wait for the official release I obtained an advance copy of the album and it is an understatement that I was utterly flawed. Hopefully it will not be too far off release after this goes to print, as it is an amazing release that is even leaps ahead of the stunning debut. If this album does not place Desiderii Marginis at the top of the genre nothing will! Until the fateful day that will herald the release of 'deadbeat' continue on dear readers...

Desiderii Marginis in my opinion is an under recognised group considering the stunning debut and the even more stunning upcoming follow-up (yes I have been privy to an advance copy). How do you view your involvement in the underground ambient scene and what is the perception of the status you have within it? Frankly I'm not very involved in the scene at all and I have no idea what kind of "status" I may have. Since the first album was favourably reviewed I can't say that I feel at all under recognised though. It doesn't really matter anyway, I'm not doing this for the recognition. I'm simply exercising my freedom of expression. If I like the music myself that's enough, if someone else likes it - well that's even better. Personally I can understand if some people play a waiting game when new acts pop-up seemingly out of nowhere. I mean, it's always interesting to know where bands come from, who they are and where they started out musically.

Taking a basic definition of the conversion of the projects name (Marginis=Margin, Desiderii=Desideratum) it would roughly translate to "on the edge of something lacking but desired". How does this if at all relate to your use and interpretation of the moniker? Desiderii Marginis means "the edge of dreams". I want my music to be a little like that. In our dreams familiar elements blend with the forgotten or unconscious producing a strange experience of fear, pleasure or comfort.

There is an obvious influence in your compositions, most markedly in reference to the early 90's sounds of many CMI and affiliated artists (I would mostly point to raison d'être, morthound, archon satani). At what point did you get involved in the scene and from whom do you personally feel you took inspiration from when you first started composing music? I discovered Cold meat industry via Peter Andersson (Raison d'être). He worked in CMI's store in Linköping and he brought my demos there and made Roger Karmanik listen to them. Of course I've listened a lot to the artists mentioned, especially Morthound's "This crying age" and "Spindriff", Raison's "Prospectus I" and more stuff like that. The early CMI sound reminded me a lot of what I was experimenting with at the time so it felt like coming home really. Anyway, I believe the above to be were I've found most of my influences.

What do you consider your influences were on the debut album compared to those influences you would acknowledge on your second full length? How do you feel that the two albums differ and did you approach writing them in a different way? (Particularly as there is a certain compositional ridged-ness to the tracks on your debut 'songs over ruins' to the more flowing freeform works of your upcoming second album 'deadbeat'). I think the new album represents a step forward in composing and sound quality. I've spent a lot of time trying to create more elaborate rhythmic patterns, as well as a more dynamic spectrum of sound. On "Songs over ruins" I used quite conventional percussive timbres like snare drums and timpani for example. That I have been avoiding on the new album, instead I've used more diffuse or distorted elements for drums. I didn't experiment very much with odd beats either, something I've done on "Deadbeat" to a greater extent, and with a great result I think. I also definitely believe the new material to be a whole lot darker than the old one. More despair... I wanted the new songs to be noisier, more flowing and less immediate than the first ones. That was my starting point at least. Regarding my influences I can't say they differ much from when I recorded the first album. Actually I haven't taken in very much musically at all lately. At least I can't come to think of anything or anyone in particular.

How would you respond to the comparisons you received in relation to raison d'être. Particularly since CMI seemed to play up this angle in your bio of the Absolute Supper compilation with matters further complicated by none other than Peter Andersson of the said group assisting in the mixing of your upcoming album? I don't mind being compared to Raison d'être but I feel that some people tend to stress the similarities between us. I believe we do our composing in quite different ways and with different results. You could say that we both work in a common musical field - and the early CMI sound remains my creative refuge - but if one think that we're extremely alike one should listen more carefully. There's a lot of big differences between us. When Roger Karmanik wrote the bio for the Absolute supper I'd say that was about as much as knew about me at the time - that I lived (and still live) on the same street as Peter Andersson and that we're both involved in dark-ambient industrial music among others. I can't imagine that he wanted to accentuate any similarities. By the way it's a slight misunderstanding that Peter assisted in the mixing of the new album. He helped me with the mastering from DAT-tape to CD but had nothing at all to do with the sound per se. Peter is frequently asked to assist in the making of CD-masters for various CMI artists simply because he has done it many times and he's good at it. However it doesn't seem to complicate matters in those cases.

How drastically does your study for your masters degree in philosophy, history, art and literature influence Desiderii Marginis (or could it be that Desiderii Marginis sparked your interest in such study?). What do you hope to achieve or pursue (musically or otherwise) once your study is complete? Well, I find my studies enriching and inspiring in many aspects. To learn how artists have broken new ground over the years for example. It feels like I've got access to a rich source of ideas. Ideas not necessarily concerning music but ways to deal with creativity that I couldn't have come up with on my own. My aim is not to make music that is particularly clever or something like that, I want it to be atmospheric and ambient. Actually I think that some modest insight in the history of art and philosophy can help you avoid falling into the most common artistic traps. But that's just my personal opinion.

Your tracks have certain religious connotations inherent in the titles "the core of hell II" & "solemn descent" off the first album and "God's shadow on earth", "Angelus" and "souls lost" off the new



album, along with a partial religious aura to the sound. Are these utilised to simply bolster the atmospheres being created or is their some deeper personal ideal being explored? I think that exciting tensions arise in the music when you mix high and low elements, such as sacral Gregorian chants with noise and distortion, or electronically artificial sounds with sampled atmospheres from reality. Maybe the religious influences are an expression of my feeling that music (much like faith I imagine) is searching and exploring. Maybe the religious themes are simply the most convenient and obvious allusions for the kind of feelings and ambience I deal with. I'm not a religious person however. I just try to match the titles with the mood of the song, but I don't know where these allusions come from.

With the skills you possess in music written I'm sure you would have had some prior musical recording experience. Is this the case and does music composing come easily for you? I've been composing and recording music for at least ten years now. Some friends and I have built up a rather decent studio together over this period of time and hopefully acquired some sort of skill in working there. I still find it easy and inspiring to be in the studio and I can't spend enough time there really.

In terms of actual sound there is the obvious use of synths and associated programming equipment within your works, however do you infuse the use of any real instrumentation? On the new album I choose not to use any real instruments at all. Basically I wanted it to be less orchestral than it's predecessor. I have tried to minimise the use of horn sections, timpani and such - even though I still make use of strings to some extent. Of course the term "real instrumentation" can include some of the contraptions I put together to sample, but if you mean playing guitars, drums or the likes I have no such plans for Desiderii Marginis. I am currently involved in an experimental (and so far nameless) project with a guy who plays Celtic harp (among others) and we'll see what comes out of it. It sounds very interesting and quite unique I think, not neo-folk at all.

In a listener submitting to Desiderii Marginis what expectations do you have for their choice of listening environment? (The reason I ask is that your web page has the phrase "shut your eyes and die a little"). I don't care were people choose to listen to my music. I wrote that phrase because I know that some people don't actually listen, they just play the record. I want people to shut down everything else and actually listen. Hopefully the music will lead your mind astray. I want my music to trigger some kind of mental odyssey, it is not meant to be a humming background. If a musical wallpaper is what people want they might just as well open a window and listen to the birds singing or the traffic roaring.

From your web page it seems that the covers of you previous demos where quite aesthetic in presentation, thus I was wondering did you have input in the covers of the demos and your debut album/ upcoming album, or are you happy to leave this up to the skills of Kaptain Karmanik? The demo covers were made by me, since that was way before my signing to CMI. I also made the tape copies myself and sold them which might explain why they are so few and far between. The cover for "Songs over ruins" were made entirely by Roger Karmanik since I had no proper idea of how it should look. For the "Deadbeat" album I have made the cover and Roger looked at it and had his saying about some of the details. I safely rely a lot on Roger when it comes to these kind of things since he's been creating amazing artwork for so long.

In regard to these demo's, these are no longer available as stated on your web page. In hindsight are you happy with them in relation to Desiderii Marginis today and is it likely these may be re-issued (perhaps re-mastered on CD) for historical purposes? It's always with mixed emotions I look back at earlier songs. I can't say that I'm not satisfied with the music and it remains a documentation of where I stood musically at that time. On the other hand I can't help wondering how I could have done things differently to make it a little better. A lot of people have been inquiring about these demos so I feel it would be a good idea to put together some sort of retrospective album. I have actually begun re-mixing and re-mastering my first two demos 'Consecrare' and 'Via Peregrinus'. Eventually this will result in a release including about ten tracks. Plus, most likely, some entirely new track(s) as well. I try to be as true as I can to the original recording in this process, although some minor changes and some fixing-up is absolutely needed for the sound quality to become (at least) acceptable.

Are you a vinyl junkie and would you like have your releases pressed on this format? What do you consider are the advantages and disadvantages you see of vinyl both generally and in relation to your compositional works? No, I'm not a vinyl junkie even though I sometimes miss those big inviting sleeves. Vinyl records are a bitch to carry around like when you move, but so are books, and pianos... I know there are lots of people out there whose hearts bleed for the old 12" so I wouldn't mind releasing on vinyl, maybe some special edition or picture disc could be an idea. Come to think of it, it might be funny to release some early Desiderii material on vinyl, like a 2x12" or something like that... I'll most certainly talk to Roger about this!

Has Desiderii Marginis had the opportunity to perform live before and if not is this something that you would like to pursue? No Desiderii haven't done any live performances. Hopefully there will be some opportunity in the future, it depends on the circumstances. From what I've heard (and seen) being on the road with the CMI-circus can be really hazardous to your liver. But I'd gladly expose myself to that kind of unhealth!

As it seems most projects at least dabble in other music output do you have any side projects on offer or are you able to achieve your full musical vision via the one recording name? I mentioned before that I'm collaborating with a harpist right now. It remains to be seen if it's ever released at all and whether it turns out to be a reappearing project. Apart from this I play in a eight members strong medieval band where I can vent my aggressions in traditionally acoustic form playing cittern, bombarde, shawn, and bagpipe. I have no other plans or project for the moment. Maybe I'll do a 'guest appearance' for one of CMI's other acts but that is still an unwritten chapter...

Anything to add in conclusion? No that's it really. <http://home.swipnet.se/desiderii/>



black lung

Like an insidious malignant cancer on the underbelly of the electronica scene, the anti-corporate/ anti-capitalist sentiments of Australian project black lung are set against a flurry of noise, samples and way out techo(ish) beats. I must also say that with a lack of Australian projects that align themselves with the content of this publication I am honoured to bring forth this feature. The following transcript details the sharp (and sometimes concise) responses of black lung's lone protagonist David Thrussell, that were submitted a mere few weeks before publication....

Firstly can you introduce the black lung phenomenon, how long you have been recording under this name, how it eventuated and your musical output thus far?

...the first black lung record was released in 1994... it was called "silent weapons for quiet wars" and was basically a collection of snog 'ambient' or atmospheric b-sides and out-takes... the 2nd black lung album "the depopulation bomb" was created as a deliberate concept album and was released in 1995 along with it's companion single "the more confusion...the more profit" ...1996 saw the release "the disinformation plague" ... 1997 "the psychocivilized society"... 1998 "extraordinary popular delusions" and late 1999/ early 2000 "the great architect"...

Given the Melbourne underground electronica scene has on numerous occasions been big noted by travelling artists, how do you see that black lung fits into this scene (if at all), and what is your overall opinion of the Australian and specifically the Melbourne scene? black lung is a fierce beast that lives isolated and degenerate in the distant hills!!! it has neither the time nor the temperament to deal with shabby, shallow beings... beware the intrepid traveller who seeks out contact with this slumbering beast...

Further to the above black lung is not something you seem to take out into the live medium much. Is this by choice of the lack of interest in your music from the rave and techno fraternity? actually i do quite a few black lung shows...26 in europe last year, 6 in the usa ...and a hand full in australia...last local black lung show was in perth early june 2000...next is an anti-olympics gig in sydney september 1st...mainstream rave, mainstream "alternative" and pop scenes have no interest in black lung and the feeling is mutual...

Considering that most of your musical output is feverously embraced internationally, yet barely makes a ripple in your home country, can you express some of your thoughts on the Australian industry (both labels & music store outlets), availability of venues that offer more underground musical styles and the music buying public in general? ...well, australia is a good place to live in many ways...but the music scene is not one of them...even the so called "alternative" "scene" is bizarrely conservative and bitchy...so be it...

Also you have a close association with many Ant-Zen artists and affiliates, which are obviously located

overseas. How did this come about and what do you see are the advantages and disadvantages of living in Australia yet have closer ties to an overseas scene than the local one? ...met most of these artists and labels touring internationally...ant-zen are nice people delivering good music and it works fine...the majority of the australian "scene" is diabolical...so no great loss there...

Are you currently officially signed to any label in particular? (given the various labels which have had a hand in producing your releases).metropolis in the u.s.a, ant-zen in europe for snog and black lung, kk records

and atomic reactor in europe for black lung...etc...

The title of your latest black Lung CD is 'The Great Architect' obviously refers to Charles Darwin due to the title of the first track ('darwinian mind web') and likewise I believe it is his image on the back cover, however knowing that you never like to be totally obvious could the CD's title likewise have any connotations regarding Freemasonry? ...well close, but no banana!...it's h.g wells on the back cover...i've been reading a lot of his non-fiction books in recent times..."the new world order" from 1940 is chillingly accurate in many

ways..."the open conspiracy" is another interesting tome...consider this...herbert george wells wrote "the new world order" in 1940 imploring a worldwide economic confederation to eliminate corporate waste, environmental damage and uncontrolled corporate power!!...the fine details of his theory have been implemented now almost to the letter, but minus his social concerns...who re-invented his phrase and concept in the public eye?...u.s president george herbert walker bush(walker was the name of a famous u.s imperialist general at the turn of the 1800/1900's in central america)!!!!...interesting choice of names there!!!!...and as you know "the great architect" is the masonic term for god...globalization is global elites playing creator...and there's more...

Regardless of the above, how do Darwin's concepts align themselves with your worldview? ...while darwin had some interesting things to say, i have a hard time believing in evolution...too many gaps...too many "if's"...most lifeforms on this planet are far too complicated and deliberate to have been purely accidental in my opinion...does that make me some kind of perverted quasi-



christian?...no not really...our own capitalist society makes a mockery of "survival of the fittest"...often those with the shortest attention span and most limited world view "prosper"...

The latest CD has quite a few bouts of intentionally intense noise in amongst what is otherwise a very accessible electronica album. Is this internally used as a deterrent to those not willing to explore the more experimental facets of electronic music? ...it's not that designed...the audio signal is created through a process of improvisation and late night psychosis...if nothing else it should reflect the world around us and some of the ideas that might shape it...

Although the sounds you create have a very cutting edge studio trickery sound, I hear that in actual fact you are not overly a technology buff. Can you take us through the creative process of black lung? ...some effects boxes...some samplers...some other gadgets...stuff happens...sounds and atmospheres.....often start with some crazy sound or kinky beat...and have a little experiment...

Being a member of 'Musicians Against Copywriting Of Samples' ('MACROS') what does this involve on your part? Likewise I would have thought that amongst your other projects this would have been the least applicable to black lung? ...i have a profound interest in sampling and appropriation culture.....but it's not an academic interest...in a very down to earth sense artists have a direct moral right to recycle sound and other media that are broadcast at us, most often without our permission...if advertisers and broadcasters assume they have the right to bombard us with incredible amounts of mind-numbing crap, then we must assume we have the right to re-use it however we choose...mental self-defence, satire, profound re-contextualizations, whatever...black lung has it's fair share of sampling, but often from obscure sources and heavily treated...

Awhile back I read that you are to be presenting material at the Melbourne Underground Film Festival (organised by one Richard Wolstencroft – the man responsible for the much anticipated movie 'Pearls before Swine'). What exactly does your submission cover?...they played a couple of snog film clips...and some of our music is in the film "pearls before swine"...unfortunately i was out of the country at the time...

Referencing movies, you (as black lung) along with John Sellekaers (as Xingu Hill) have recently scored the soundtrack to an Italian science fiction movie by the name of 'The Andronechron Incident'. How did this eventuate, and what sort of brief were you given to work with? (ie: did you see footage prior to the compositional process). What other information can you divulge about this movie and is it likely to receive a wide release? ...italian sci-fi film...bit like "pi"...actually pretty good plot!...has had a wide release in italy...but not australia!... yeah, saw a rough cut when composing...

Will your full soundtrack of this motion picture be furnished with a release considering only two cuts have been released this far on a limited 10" ep? ...not completely sure, bit tied up with some other things...

Recently you the were nominated as one of 30 young, up and coming individuals (picked from a variety of creative fields) to watch out for in an article run by The Age newspaper (one of the major Melbourne daily newspapers). While this is certainly a noteworthy achievement, surely you would approach this with some cynicism? What is the story behind this feature? ...yeah, that was pretty stupid...they tried to censor my responses to their interview questions and assign me a "stylist" for the photo shoot...i refused on both counts...and gave them hell...it's just fluff to fill in the gaps between advertising...but my mum liked it!...

Having DJ'ed at the Death in June/ Der Blutarsch gig of July 1999 under the guise of a reformation of a previous club you were involved in ('Hellfire' that ran in both Melbourne and Sydney), I wanted to ask whether you had any interest in or followed the musical scenes associated with the above groups? ...i have a passing acquaintance with douglas and do enjoy some music that comes out in that area...especially boyd, "death in june", "current 93", "nurse with wound", etc...

What musical genres, sounds, artists etc specifically interest you and do you hold any sort of preconceived bias that if something is popular that it couldn't possibly be good music? ...well, i'm not completely prejudiced against popular music, although one can't help being a little suspicious!!!...statistically speaking there probably hasn't been any decent pop music since 1969!!!...personally i listen to a whole slew of music, the darker, more poignant country music (johnny cash, lee hazlewood, porter wagoner),italian film musics, mid period electronic music(morton subotnick is my current fave)...i don't get exposed to much popular culture , but i did see a sickeningly fascinating video on a plane the other day...aqua's "cartoon heroes", the lyrics were "full on", a blatant insult to their audience...check them out...

Within black lung's inspiration there are prevalent themes of conspiracy theories, media manipulation and non conformity themes, often twisted with a sly sense of humor. What if anything are you attempting to achieve philosophically with black lung as in comparison to Snog which are much more blatant and upfront in the anti-capitalist sentiments? ...black lung is instrumental, so for better or worse one has to be more "subtle"!...snog is centred around traditional song structures whereas black lung is more experimental(?) and certainly more free-form and spontaneous...b.l is unsurprisingly more soundscape orientated, like a sonic map of my inner cranium...may the good lord help me!...

Of your own making is 'International Mind Control Corporation' which would seem to be another creation of your sly humor. Has there ever been serious thought in making this into a proactive information dissemination forum to educate/ inform of the topics explored through your music? (I note that your web page does this to an extent already). ...you think the i.m.c.c. is creation of my "sly humour"?...indeed, my friend, the joke is on you...

In a previous interview I have read with you ('Wounded No. 6') you listed books 'Holy Blood, Holy Grail' & 'Spear of Destiny' as sources of influence. What is exactly your interest in the Grail Myths, Christian Mysticism and the Templar Knights and do you have any held opinions on such matters? ...i've read a lot of those type of books...i like a good "real life" mystery and have deep interest in "alternate" histories, and the development of our present malaise in an historical context...actually visited rennes le chateau (the site of many "grail" mysteries) recently...most enjoyable!!!...

What movies productions and books have you experienced lately that you feel have some merit and worth? ...actually i think "hollywood" is in much better shape than top 40 pop music for example(or am i more slyly manipulated?)...chopper, arlington road, fight club, american psycho...been reading a lot of non-fiction and a lot of ray bradbury/phillip k dick etc...

In concluding what can we expect from black lung in the near future? ...crazy stunts...nude vegan tupperware parties...learn to love your real fruit festival...new 12" "sickly seratonin squeeze" in november (i think)... cheers....dt

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inade

masters of the unknown, the sonically obscure.....

When listening to Inade, one is captivated by the fact that, in the realm of all that is sonically dark and explorative, Inade go to places that even the most vivid dark sonicscape practitioners have yet to traverse. The edge of the universe is but a starting point, the perimeters of unknown dimensions, but launching pads, for the dense, ultra-panoramic creations of Inade's sonic cartographers, Rene Lehmann and Knut Enderlein. Since 1991, they have reveled in the creation of music that is limitless, bound to nothing, not even the fathomless reservoir of imagination that overflows from the minds of its creators. As explained by Rene: "The main focus is to transform ideas, concepts or legends which are congruent with our own thoughts and interests. Inade is like an echosounder into unseen/unheard plains and abstract spheres where the anonymous becomes alive. We want to place traces into inter-dimensional spheres from where the listener gets a sonic silhouette, a puzzle of innumerable pieces. The development of the music was probably half calculated and half have elements of chance played a role. During the first years we have changed our equipment quite often and mostly we worked with very limited sources. That is why the final results were more or less depending from what the sound sources gave. Later the conditions became much better and we were able to control and influence the process in the way we wanted." 2000 sees the band shifting into creative overdrive as a plethora of re-issues and new materiel peers over the horizon. "At the moment we are in the process of recording the new full length album. Although it is quite difficult to describe [one's] own recordings with words, we can say at this point that the new material becomes more intensive and physical. The Crackling Of The Anonymous will be our most complex single work, and we hope that we can finish it during the summer of 2000. We are going to release this CD on our Loki label." Also on the forefront: "The Colliding Dimensions Live LP, with material from the shows we had in the States, the UK, and recently in Prague. Other plans are to reissue the Burning Flesh MC onto a limited CD edition through Loki. That tape was released in 1993 and we are just remastering it and we will add also 30 minutes of unreleased material." How did the shows in the states go? Any highlights...or lowlights? "Before we [traveled to] the States we have been warned that the conditions to play live Overseas are pretty bad. Maybe we had luck but we cannot agree with that. The whole tour and all the shows went very well and we were absolutely satisfied with it. Jason Mantis [Malignant] and many others did great jobs to organize the events and we felt very welcome there. Beside a mono P.A. in Toronto and some tiring and long driving, there were no real lowlights during the tour." Also just out or forthcoming: the re-issue of 1996's Aldebaran CD, probably the definitive Inade experience (so far), shattering one's meager perceptions of what to expect from dark sonicscape music, a roiling confluence of space and time, dream and dimension, myth and mystery, all channeled through a textural skin of human, alien and insectile design (then again, 1999's V.I.T.R.I.O.L. 7" showed the band expanding on previous sonic notions, an awe-inspiring tour de force that is nothing less than phenomenal!); and the just released Quartered Void 7", one of the innumerable puzzle pieces, the link between Aldebaran, The Flood Of The White Light 10", and the V.I.T.R.I.O.L. 7". As they continue to meld the seemingly known (though each of our perceptions of 'the known' may differ greatly, as constructed by each of our personal psychological and sociological inhibitions) with the seemingly unknown (though each of our perceptions of 'the unknown' may be hampered by denial, by the fear of allowing 'the unknown' any substantial foothold in each of our singular realities), the work of Inade is, ultimately, designed to open doorways into the possible, in which the dark and the light, the past and the future (as well as the 'roiling confluence' of aural impressions gleaned from Aldebaran's vast sonic portfolio), embrace. Because Inade is the key. It's up to the daring listener to unlock the door. The sonic possibilities are infinite...

(Reprinted by permission from Side-Line magazine: www.side-line.com)—JC Smith

ildfrost

Ildfrost had been somewhat quiet since the release of the 'Natanael' CD back in 1997, yet have now returned with a new album and a new label. Likewise with a new sound and direction being explored, the music significantly veers away from the medieval/ neo classical sound of the first two releases towards intelligent tribal/ neo classical tinged electronica. Questions and answers were passed back and forth between myself and single member Jens Petter Nilsen during July/ August 2000, both before and after I obtained the new album 'you'll never sparkle in hell' issued on Fluttering Dragon Records.

Hello Jens and welcome to Spectrum 4#. To begin with you seem to be quite a well educated individual in both the realms of art and philosophy (evidenced through the writings/ quotes included on the 'Natanael' and 'You'll never sparkle in hell' CD covers). Are these areas you have undertaken higher study in or are simply facets of your personal interests? I have studied philosophy at the University of Oslo for a couple of years. I have no formal 'art-education' as such, but I think literature/ philosophy/ art are quite closely linked in modern philosophical thought. In postmodernism, there isn't even any difference between the 3. I have a somewhat defective disposition for philosophy, meaning I don't think I have the stamina for professional philosophy, but I still have a great interest in philosophical literature. And literature. I think of myself as a bricoleur. To me, philosophy/ art/ literature is a puzzle, only one is not combining pieces; one is taking them apart.

How do you personally view Ildfrost from an artistic and likewise philosophic stance? It's changing all the time. I think of it as a playground. A forum for which I may pour my ideas and gibberish nonsense.

There is quite a lengthy written passage/ conversation styled transcript on the 'Natanael' cover, and although there is no credit I am assuming that this was penned by you. I know that you are wary of interpreting what is written and the concepts behind it, however angling a question from a different perspective, what you wanting to achieve by the passages inclusion?

I wanted to approach a very difficult theme. And I did not know how. By directly addressing it, I felt trapped. By directly describing it I felt I lost the plot completely. Only as a storytelling, or a play, I was able to somewhat find a plane where I could engage in a meaningful discourse about the subject. I had to remove myself to a third person, to obtain the proper distance. Let me quote from the booklet of 'You'll never sparkle in hell': "Death defies any possible approach". So I cannot communicate my intentions, only delineating them by comparison.

Within the written passage of 'Natanael' and the exploration and argumentation of the concept of sin, yet with the writings on the cover of 'you'll never sparkle in hell' they seem to be written from a very apathetic viewpoint and often focusing on the concept of 'nothingness'. How have your personal values altered over time resulting in the reevaluation of your writing viewpoint?

I don't know. There is an obvious development towards a stern cynicism, or nihilism if you like, I guess that's what you mean with 'apathetic', in my work with Ildfrost. But I am not flatly stating the meaninglessness of life as such. Autumn Departure had a certain naiveté over it, Natanael was more focused and cynical, while 'You'll never sparkle...' debates the very essence of cynicism. Cynicism is where all fancy dreams ends and melancholy starts; it's where creatively really has to start.

For me it is not clear where the title 'you'll never sparkle in hell' fits into the concepts, ideas and song titles of the album. Can you expand a little on its meaning and significance in the overall framework of the release?

The title of the album is an homage to a great musical pioneer and artist that I really respect. I had the idea of the album title a long time ago, and when the album was finished I could not decide if it was the right title or not. And after I had read, and re-read the text I thought it fitted. It describes a hopelessness and a uselessness; it indicate an insignificance. So it was somehow a case of 'art-by accident'. It's a bricolage of ideas with a storyline. Whereas the music on the two first albums was somehow direct linked with the lyrics, the music of "You'll never sparkle" could be seen as a soundtrack to the concept of the album. The overall idea is expressed in the booklet by text. It occurred to me in making this album, the text was written a before the music, that I should try a different route. The musical pieces are associations in reading the text. Filling holes, trying different paths and maybe blurring the feeling of an 'overall' concept, because 'meaninglessness' as a concept really isn't any concept. If that makes sense. I think it would have turned out rather strange if I had set out to directly compose music to this text. It would be like trying to compose a work for Becketts 'Endgame'.

Back in 1998 there was a scheduled MCD to be released on Cold Meat Industry entitled 'the neverlies'. Obviously this item has to date not eventuated, thus I wanted to ask if these recordings have anything to do with your latest CD 'you'll never sparkle in hell'? «The Neverlies» was never released. And I don't think it ever will be. It has absolutely nothing to do with «You'll never sparkle in hell». It's very old material, and quite frankly I am not sure I like it much anymore.

Also what was the circumstance surrounding your departure from Cold Meat Industry to now be signed to Fluttering Dragon? I got fed up with delays of all sorts. Everything took so much time. It was not only regarding Ildfrost, but business in general on Cold Meat. Add that to the fact that I did not actually favour the 'new' musical direction on Cold Meat. I got an offer from Fluttering Dragon Records on exactly the right time, and I was very happy to change base.

Ildfrost started as a two piece (or at least two individuals where present on the debut 'Autumn Departure' album). Given that Jane Christina Aasterud left the group prior to the 'Natanael' album, I wanted to ask what were her musical contributions to the group and did she play a part in the writing of any of the compositions? Jane was only a voice. She did not contribute with anything. I think she might have come up with some song titles on Autumn Departure, but that's about it.

It is quite obvious the actual music of Ildfrost became overall much more rich, lavish and filmic between the debut to second album. What was the difference in approach when recording each of these albums?

I really don't know. On Autumn Departure I had to borrow everything. I didn't even have my own synth. I had to borrow Violins, Saxophones, Microphones, Synths and what not. The only thing I owned was an old 8-track analogue recorder with "14 tape. On Natanael I had got my own gearpark, and the whole album was recorded digitally in a studio in Oslo. The technical aspects aside, I obviously had very different ideas and intentions with Natanael than I had with Autumn Departure. I had a much clearer idea of what I wanted to do on Natanael, as well as I felt the lyrical backdrop had become so much more important. And the workspace was so much more relaxed.

Now with quite a large passage of time having passed between the releases of 'Autumn Departure' and 'Natanael', how do you view each piece in hindsight? I think they're both charming, and very sincere. And while they both definitely have their moments of genuine brilliance, I am not really such a huge fan of those albums today. They represent a period of my life I am over and done with.

It appears that both of the above mentioned albums were recorded in a Studio setting. What are your current surrounds in which you write and compose music and has this altered over time? It has altered immensely! Autumn Departure was recorded on borrowed equipment, in my cousins basement. Natanael was recorded in an OK studio in Oslo, with a 100% jack-off of a technician. 'You'll never sparkle in hell' was recorded in the process of setting up my new studio. Today I have a top-notch studio surrounding me in my bedroom. I have access to live recording facilities, if I should need violins, or choirs or whatever. I am very happy with my current set-up. And I have

become quite a bit nerdy tech-head over the years. I even now work in Norwegians biggest music magazine as a gear tester (i.e. New samplers synths etc).

I assume that you mostly reply on synths/ keyboards/ programmers to compose your music, and considering you compose neo-classical/ neo-orchestral type music scores do you have any grand vision of having your music played by a full orchestra? Well, yes.....it would have been nice. Especially some pieces from Natanael. I have access to a full orchestra, so it's not impossible for me to do this, it's just not something I would invest that much an amount of time in doing right now. In the 2 last years I have been dabbling more and more into a technological sphere. "You'll never sparkle in hell" is hardly a neo-classical piece of work.

Talking more about the new album 'you'll never sparkle in hell', it certainly shows an even more drastic change then that from 'Autumn Departure' to 'Natanael'. While it retains an orchestral/ classical undercurrent your sound is now infused with both a tribal and electronica elements that makes for quite an eclectic & cinematic listen. How do you deem a musical piece to be suitable for Ildfrost, or is it that there are no real limits you place on what the project can be? I don't feel that there are any musical limits as such, but I have to feel that the music\song fits into a concept. For instance I am planning a completely acoustic album, a 100% electronic album and even more jazzy songs. **As long as I feel the mood of the song is right, whatever that may be, I'll go with it.**

If your own words how would you describe your current sound and direction that has been pursued on 'you'll never sparkle in hell'? Where do you think you will take Ildfrost's sound next? That's a hard one. Ildfrost probably sound like a drunk vangelis meets a harsh version of Portishead, in a Dead can Dance setting. Maybe? How the next album will sound?? Well, probably more like 'You'll never sparkle' than the two former albums. But then again, I am entertaining the idea of an 100% acoustic album as well.....we'll see.

Without including any photos of yourself on the cover of the new album, nevertheless the photos that you both supplied me and others that I have seen show yourself to be somewhat of a chameleon with your image, that obviously begs the comparison to the chameleon characteristics of your music. Thoughts? He,he.....as I said, I am a bricoleur. I like playing with images, sounds, text, and ideas all over. I saw an ad for some obscure product on TV the other day, it said: "Time changes, do you?". That doesn't necessarily mean that one abandon everything one was involved in before. The most funny part is how people are hung up in appearances. Images are obviously a manipulative tool, a lot of people need to feel their buying a 'package' to fit. And when you're involved in music everone expect you to have an 'image'. I like to have several images.....I really don't have any idea of what my image is really. It's a mesh of things I guess.

I wanted to inquire what music you grew up listening to? Would you acknowledge any of this as inspiration for your own music and likewise what encompasses your listening time currently? I grew up listening to Metallica, Whitney Houston, Top of the pops shows, Venom, and a lot of Norwegian music. I don't think this music inspired me much. It was first when I got a serious interest in film that I started listening to more experimental music. I think that my early interest in horror movies have had the greatest impact, and I still loves a lot of those scores today! Today i listen to everything by Amon Tobin, some rap, Cinemathic Orchestra, Brian Eno (Old and current), Lori Anderson, DJ Food, A lot of Ninja Tune acts really, Coil , Miles Davids...a lot of old jazz stuff.....a vast mixture really.

On the 'Natanael' cover the contact address is listed as Northern Contemporary Compositions (N.C.C). Exactly what is this organization? I have nothing to say.

Is this brief response at all in relation to your current compositions no longer being very 'contemporary'? No.

With another question relating to the 'Natanael' CD, track three contains some horrific high pitched shrieks for a small segment of the vocals. This begs the question that considering you reside in Norway, was this at all a reference to the black metal explosion going on in your country at the time? Did you take much/ any interests in the extreme actions of factions of the black metal underground? (as I believe there was quite a bit of media coverage). No, the vocals was just aimed to indicate desperation. It had no reference to the BM scene in Norway. But I can understand how one would presume that! That aside, I had an involvement in the BM scene. Back in 90-92. Quite some time before the recordings of Natanael. I was actually a vocalist in a band. I had to sing that way ALL THE TIME! Can you imagine that? One get's all dizzy when singing\screaming in such a high pitch. I had not that much an interest in the actions though. It was a purly musical engagement.

Having started Ildfrost back in something like 92-93, at that stage were you aware of the underground music genre that revolves around labels such as CMI? Have you aims changed drastically from inception of the project? Yes, I was aware of the genre or scene if you like. But Ildfrost did not actually fit into that genre did it? It was something new, at least on a scandinavic scale. While that scene had the most horrible and harsh dark ambient on one side and Dead Can Dance on the other, Ildfrost was something in between. My aims have changed drastically, indeed they have. Sadly I have lost a lot of the naivety.

Is there much archival work from the time prior to the debut release that you would ever consider releasing? Yes there is. I think some of it may find its way into a release. In fact, there will be an LP version of 'You'll never sparkle in hell' which will only contain 2-3 songs from the CD. The rest of the songs are brand new. These are songs that did not quite make it to the album, but still have something on offer.

Considering that both albums are quite serious in sound and content, I was surprised to hear that the two tracks of yours included on 'the Absolute Supper' compilation were less so, actually being quite playful. Knowing that these tracks predate both albums, I wanted to ask if there was a change in intent and focus on both the type of music you were composing the ideas behind it? I have always stressed the playful nature of Ildfrost. Ildfrost is more playful today than it ever was. it just doesn't always appear that way. But I am serious too, dead serious.

Conclusional remarks? Thank you very much for this interesting interview. If people are interested in Ildfrost they should contact Fluttering Dragon records at: Fluttering Dragon Records: P O Box 182, 03-700 Warszawa 4, Poland (++48 22 813 21 92), webpage: www.serpent.com.pl e-mail: xak@serpent.com.pl and watch this space for further info: www.ildfrost.com thank you. end int.



With so many projects floating around in the underground, some artists (rightly or wrongly) simply get overlooked. For myself Bad Sector were one such group, but all that changed when I heard the 'Plasma' CD (and later the 'Dolmen Factory' & 'Polonoid' CD's). Well, all I can say is that the error of my ways was quickly noted as all releases contain expertly produced experimental sonics that bridge the gap to more structured dark ambience (incidentally of which there are few if any groups that have a similar sound). Sole sonic manipulator Massimo Magrini filled me in regarding all the important facts and concepts surrounding his project.....

Bad Sector do not seem to have the profile of other similar acts, however you are certainly deserving of wider recognition. What are your thoughts on your achievements and level of success you have gained in the 8 years recording as Bad Sector? I simply recognize that the music I make cannot have a larger audience. Nevertheless, if I could have more time to spend in promoting the project I could spread it better.

Can you list your main releases (both out and upcoming) from Bad Sector and the labels you have thus far been affiliated with? Ampos, my first CD was printed in 1995 by God Factory (at that time it was a sub-label of StaalPlaat). Even if it was recorded using very poor equipment it is still the most appreciated work. The Dolmen EP, printed on 1996 by Drone Recs, have a "cleaner" sound. It had a rather good success, too (remember we are talking about underground products), so that a second edition was made later. In 1998 Old Europa Cafe printed Plasma, a little more "experimental", with a set of interesting sources. In the same period Jesus Blood 10' was printed by Loki/Power and Steel. In the end of that year Bastet/VUZ printed Polonoid on CD. It was a too limited edition, respect to its good quality. A very limited edition tape, with a set of tracks in the style of Dolmen was sold out in few days, so that Membrum Debile Propaganda reprinted it on CD with a very nice digipack in 1999. It had a good "success" in the middle-europe countries. The new CD will be out on AVA/ES1, an American label. It 's rather harsher and "electronic", respect to previous works. Then, before the end of the year I'll print a 7" on Pre-feed and a 3" CD on Cohort recs. Also, the collaboration tape with Contagious Orgasm will be reprinted on CD by OEC with two new tracks, in the next weeks.

How did you come to work with these various labels and are these associations more than just related to your music output? Likewise are you satisfied with the results? There are pros and cons working with rather small underground labels. It's good that most of times you have no restriction in the sound you have to record. Cons (in some cases) are no larger distribution, not so professional graphics and packages. As far as money gained for the releases: it's another story, difficult to explain in few words. Here I just say that some labels are not so honest (or too much... "home-based").

You yourself describe your music as "structured noise, dark ambient and iterative minimal". Can you elaborate of you personal interpretation of this description? I think it's a very simple and good description of the sound you can listen to, putting a Bad Sector CD in you player. Much of the sound matter I use is very noisy and fuzzy (as my life...). But it's not a free-form noise, I usually use noisy element to build ambient-like structures. I use the term "ambient" to describe a sound which create an overall atmosphere, instead of telling a sequential story (like a song, or...a symphony). And most of time it's a dark atmosphere, I am not an optimist. To reinforce these atmospheres I usually use some very minimal and deep "melodic" patterns.

Your project manages to produce some great dark ambient atmospheres, however there always seems to be an intent involved in using interesting source material such as hospital equipment, fluorescent tubes electrical pulse etc to enhance the material. Can you describe some of these unusual sound sources used? Of these sound sources can you describe each and the inherit atmospheres each of them possess? In most part how do you go about collecting and collating such source material? Can you also describe your composition process? I tried to use additional unusual sound sources, trying to catch its character, before its sound. Normally I contact specialists in fields related to the object, for obtaining sources or their recordings. For example, on Plasma I used sounds generated by the interaction between particles coming from the space and the earth's electromagnetic field. Stephen McGreevy, an American expert in these field, gave me some of its recordings. I followed the same process for some of the other sounds. Some times I personally do the recordings by myself. For example, in the forthcoming CD I used a geiger counter and a small amount of Radium, a radioactive element. I processed the signal generated by the counter in different ways, and I used it for triggering samples and musical patterns, too. Normally I use sources that have relations with technology and science, with a "negative" feeling inside (war, sickness, death and destruction), or with a cold, non human character (e.g. sounds on Plasma). Anyway, sometimes these sounds have a very interesting sound, besides its origin, and they suggest to me the structure of the whole track. In all my works I started from an overall concept, deciding at first the main roads I have to take. However, I do not like "pure" conceptual musical: sometimes very good concepts will take to a very boring audio result. If you want to make listenable music, even if "experimental", concepts cannot have the total control of the creation process. Instead, I use a concept trying to build an atmosphere related to it. And all these "concepts" are parts of global meta-concept, which reflect my personal view of reality.

Does the composition or alternatively the sound source make up the initial framework of a new piece? How do you view/ treat you music writing process - as a partial experiment or simply songwriting? The creation process have always



BAD SECTOR

to be a partial experiment. You can forget this only if you are making jingles for commercials, or something alike. At the same time, you cannot consider a preliminary experiment, even if it's interesting, as a final result: there is a lot of additional work to do. You could call this process "song"-writing!

Your biography has a statement to the effect that early performances were in collaboration with the Computer Music Lab of CNUCE/CNR (National Research Council of Italy). How did you come to be involved with them and what were your experiments and results gained? In 1994 I had a degree in Computer Science, with a thesis on a computer music subject. I did the thesis work in that institute of the CNR. My work during those months was greatly appreciated by CNR researchers, that I started a collaboration with them, as an external consultant. I help them in the development of software and hardware tools for real-time performances. I helped them in creating performances, too. We did shows in a lot of places, including foreign countries (Spain, Greece, Cuba etc.). Sometimes I did Bad Sector performances in collaboration with them (e.g. Sonderangebot festival, Berlin, 1996). The collaboration has stopped last year, due the reduction of the budget of the lab.

Playing live is something you seem to be involved in on a reasonably regular basis. How much do the live performances differ from your studio workings, and what are some of the more memorable shows? Do you incorporate video/ slide footage to offset what I would assume is a reasonably low key visual performance? I like playing live: my music it's rather emotional, and the its emotional character can be improved more in live shows. Normally I control additional sound sources generator on a background layer. These generators can be heavily treated, (little synths) but also some of sound sources that are mentioned above. I have to use a background sound layer because my sound can be extremely rich of details in some moments, and it could be very difficult to generate all of them in real-time. However, I do not want to focus the listener attention only on my "gestural actions". I think that the "player" image does not respect the feeling of this kind of music. So I've always used videos, trying to create a scenario where the musical elements can find their right positions.

What are some of the other projects/ daily endeavors you are currently working on/ involved with between recorded audio output for Bad Sector? In these months I collaborate with an Italian video maker, Giacomo Verde, helping him in building interactive multimedia installations. Also, I have several collaborations with some other institutes of the CNR, regarding innovative projects involving digital signal acquisition and treatments. I've also started a collaboration with an Italian musical project, 'Where', involving underwater recordings in volcanic lakes of the center of Italy.

Is there any inherent meaning within the 'Jesus Blood' title of your 10"ep? Does this in part reflect your religious views or alternatively a specific idea? I do not believe in any religion. I hate the hypocrisy of all religious men, and I hate all the bad things they usually do under their "religious flag". In that EP I focused the attention on these aspects. I have already used these concept, even if a more vague form, during the recording of Ampos. The last track of Ampos is made using a simple program I wrote: it generates an endless series of god names. I liked this "ultra-materialist" approach to religion. The titles of the whole album was computer-generated by that application, too.

Also I just had to ask. What is the significance with the use female names with corresponding years (ie: 'Brigitte 1872') on many of the track titles off the 'Dolmen' sessions? (both on the tape/ re-release CD and EP). I've used a process similar to Ampos. I wrote a simple application that binds, with a semi-random law, names to years. I liked these weird pairs. It resembles writings on the graves, or references in history books. Choosing only female names (on Ampos) it's another additional element of...weirdness. The result is an increased emotional value of the tracks. In this way, I think titles are an important part of the overall aesthetic value.

Massimo Magrini, it has been a pleasure.....



コールド・スプリング COLD SPRING



Cold Spring Records shouldn't really need any introduction considering the high caliber of releases that have emerged from the label over the past few years (thus I will keep this brief!). In amongst the general interview banter with main man Justin Mitchell, some interesting revelations surfaced regarding current opportunities that may have major implications on the future direction & growth of the label. In short the future for Cold Spring looks bright! Intrigued?...read onwards....

The items you release span items from true pioneers such as Phychic TV through to discoveries of new talent such as Kerovnian, likewise with all releases spanning a variety of genres. How do you dictate the focus and direction of the label? Is it meticulously planned or simply follows the paths of your various musical taste? A bit of both. It is planned to such an extent that anybody who buys a COLD SPRING title can be guaranteed an item of incomparable quality, and that the music does not lean too far away from dark ambient / soundtracks so people pretty much know what to expect. Most of the acts have a political or occult drive too, and to me to gives their projects more depth and a richness that is rare, especially in today's in mainstream music. I personally like all the titles released, and so often when dealing with a new act, I consider - would I buy it myself? And if not, why would anyone else want to?

Given the wide ranging releases from classic artists and new talent, I wanted to ask how long have you been involved with industrial music and how did you become introduced to it? I was aware of the symbols of THROBBING GRISTLE (though not the music) when I was about 12 in 1979, but the first venture into buying records was about 1983 when I bought PSYCHIC TV's incredible 'Dreams Less Sweet' album, as I thought Marc Almond was on it, and I was collecting SOFT CELL records back then. I'd never heard anything like it, and so that was my first introduction. It completely changed the way I understood music.

Having spoken to a number of indie label bosses, it is obvious that running a label is not all cash and praise for all the time and effort you put in (much like this damn magazine!). Exactly what made you decide to start and what currently keeps you motivated in running it? It was started in 1988. I was running one of the nine Access Points of THEE TEMPLE OV PSYCHICK YOUTH, and wanted to raise some money so we could afford to print the infrequent new letters. Genesis P-Orridge gave me two live tracks for a compilation cassette ('INRI') and a recording of a Psychick Youth Rally, 'THEE ANGELS OV LIGHT MEET THE ANGRY ORCHESTRA'. They sold out of their tiny runs, and I started with vinyl in 1990, and CDs in 1992. The pressing quantities have obviously changed from hundreds into thousands. Like anything else, some aspects of running it I don't like, but there's enough to keep me enthusiastic about it every day - and I genuinely feel we release some of the best music out there today. All the releases are snapped up eagerly by the fans of the label (with the VON THRONSTAHL - 'Imperium Internum' CD just selling out of its first pressing in 5 weeks!), and so there's a feeling of the label growing more and more. I'm about to start working more in TV and film so there's plenty of uncharted territory to explore!

How difficult was it setting up the label in its formative days as opposed to now and essentially what has changed? In the first days, it was difficult to get the message out there as there wasn't many magazines dedicated to any scene, so it was hard to get support and reviews. Also, the distribution network is a lot different. 'Industrial' music is taken seriously now by even mainstream distributors, which means that COLD SPRING titles are now available in all the main chain stores across Europe and the USA. Also, it takes a long time to get a fan base. When it started I used the TOPY mailing lists to try to attract attention. The mailing list now contains over 3000 people.

Does Cold Spring and the associated mail order business encompass what you call you full time job? Yeah, I couldn't do it at all if I had a regular day-job.

Of all of the releases you have produced thus far what has been the most successful and in comparison what has been you favorite? Hmmm....some titles have sold very, very quickly - MERZBOW / JOHN WATERMANN - 'Brisbane / Tokyo Interlace' CD (released in 1995) was limited to 1000, and that sold out in about 3 - 4 weeks. The biggest seller of the catalogue is the MERZBOW / GENESIS P-ORRIDGE - 'A Perfect Pain' CD, which has sold thousands, and is still in constant demand from the distributors. Like I said, the VON THRONSTAHL - 'Imperium Internum' is also a very fast seller. I couldn't say what my favourite is - though they occupy the same territory musically (in the eyes of the distributors, anyway), they are very different and have their own qualities. I do like VON THRONSTAHL and INADE a lot.

Like a number of other labels you seem to delegate the design work to others. How closely do you work with both the musical artists and art producers in reaching a final design solution? It's different for every release. Sometimes the band already have their ideas sorted for artwork, with others we have to employ a designer to start from scratch. Most of the time, this is Richard Cronin, who is a genius. Images are emailed between myself and the designer and the band, until they are happy, and we go to press. It's a smooth operation, and every band on COLD SPRING has been more than delighted with the outcome. It's one aspect of the label I'm particularly proud of.

One upcoming CD which has created quite a buzz for the label (mostly outside of the 'scene' I hear) has been the full length CD by Mark Snow (of X-Files soundtrack infamy). This appears to have suffered numerous delays no thanks to selected 'input' from X-Files affiliated lawyers. Where currently is this release at and what has been the background to it thus far? MARK SNOW is a really nice guy. I've spoken to him via phone many times, and he was impressed with the CDs I mailed him - he particularly liked INADE and was blown away by the MASONNA CD we did, he'd never heard anything like it. He was excited about doing a full length album, and everything was fine. Then his lawyers and management discovered what was happening and it became very difficult. Initial contracts were 12 pages long in 8 point type, with the minutest aspect of the deal detailed. Then, last summer, Warner Bros, via his management, told me to back off while they released the terribly titled 'THE SNOW FILES', a 'best of' MARK SNOW which I don't believe was distributed outside of the USA. They didn't want any other MARK SNOW title out there, as they feared it would influence sales. After this, Mark began working on the X FILES again, and so the COLD SPRING album was postponed yet again. That pretty much brings us up to today, with one positive. MARK SNOW has written and submitted a track to be used on a forthcoming, as yet untitled, 4 band only, compilation which will act as a statement from COLD SPRING, and also a taster for TV and film companies. The album is finished and the tracks are fantastic. It really does show how far we have come. The line-up: MARK SNOW - 'Intonation' / ENDVRA - 'Theme For An Imaginary Obsession' / REMANENCE - 'Dark Moon' / BAND OF PAIN - 'November 1970'. It should be out at the end of the year.

Another CD which caused quite a bit of interest was the now release Band of Pain soundtrack work for 'Sacred Flesh'. Can you provide some information on this motion picture and how Cold Spring became invoked to release the soundtrack? Lee from JUDAS KISS magazine had interviewed the film's director and writer, and Lee mentioned to me that the film was nearing completion and some parts of the soundtrack weren't complete. I always thought Steve from BAND OF PAIN was an excellent composer and his music would compliment a dark film wonderfully, and we spoke and he agreed to let me represent him. I approached SALVATION FILMS, and after

they heard the material Steve had written, they cancelled the other music that was in place, and we got the deal on the entire soundtrack! It's a great piece of work and was a satisfying feeling sitting in a West End cinema in London 8 months later, to watch BAND OF PAIN and COLD SPRING slowly crawl up the screen. The soundtrack is out now, and we've been approached by other film and media companies, so begins the entry into the film world.

Obviously your main prerequisite for releases is to be of a high quality standard whatever the genre, however was there a conscious effort to release items such as the Band of Pain CD and Mark Snow CD to generate interest in the label from the standard scenes? Has this given the label the ability to grow to a level it might not otherwise have been able to do? Mentioning MARK SNOW certainly has opened a few doors and created interest, especially with press and distributors - like I knew it would - but it's all part of the plan to bring COLD SPRING to the attention of the public, but at the same time maintain the fact the COLD SPRING delivers extreme, often disturbing, music. MARK SNOW, obviously being immediately related to the X FILES, is a perfect bridge between the grassroots 'industrial' scene and the mainstream. Also, it must be kept in mind that the bigger publicity acts sell quantities enough to keep COLD SPRING financially viable so we can still release smaller acts who contribute immensely to the industrial scene.

Your web page lists you an official citizen of Elgaland-Vargaland, with the proclamation that that the Kingdoms of Eagaland-Vargaland as a state occupies "I: all border frontier between all countries on earth, and all areas (up to a width of 10 nautical miles) existing outside all countries territorial waters. We designate these territories our physical territory. II: Mental and perspective territories such as the Hypnagogic State (civil) and the Virual Room (digital)."

What information can you divulge about this nation state and citizenship? Is it essentially a state of mind? I became a citizen of KREV a few years ago, when they opened the London Embassy. It's really just an art experiment - but it has some nice touches - at the embassy opening they had a video loop of the founders of KREV waving to their adoring citizens. When you joined, you receive the official passport and a CD of the national anthem (which all official citizens can re-record or remix). There's quite a membership now, including some famous names.

An elder German project Satori has in the past few years been resurrected with you taking seat as co-pilot. What is currently on the cards for this and how did you become to be a member? What recordings outputs if any have you produced prior to the involvement in this project? SATORI is an English project that started in about 1984, and released a few cassettes on the influential label, BROKEN FLAG (ran by RAMLEH). I'd been a friend of Dave of the band for years. In 1994 TESCO, the great German label, were interested in a retrospective CD, which they released titled 'INFECT'. Then SATORI were asked to play at the TESCO DISCO festival in 1995, and so I suggested to Dave that he reform the group. Dave was in a dance band at the time, and hadn't listened to industrial music for years, so I took control in creating the set and the sound that we played at the festival. That was released as part of the incredible 4 x CD set that TESCO made as a document of the festival. Since then, Dave has vanished and I've written much of a new album, with 2 labels interested in releasing it. I'll keep you posted about that one, but it's taking a lot of time to get right.

In the recent past both you and Malignant Records were scheduled to release a CD each by Hazard (both of which were recorded soon after the debut disc also released on Malignant). However I heard that Benny J Nilsen of the group requested that you both hold off on releasing these in favour of him getting a newer CD issued on his now main label 'Ash International (R.I.P)'. Now that newer recordings 'north' and 'wood-field/bridge' releases have been issued on Ash, I wanted to ask if your scheduled Hazard disc is still going ahead? If so, do you have any concern that as the early material of Hazard differs greatly from his current direction it may cause confusion with those who have only picked up on the project with the recent releases? I'm not sure what the full story is with the MALIGNANT CD, but basically, Benny asked if I wanted to release a HAZARD album and sent a DAT master with some excellent dark ambient pieces on it - in my opinion, it's some of the best material he's recorded. Then he signed to ASH for a few years, but decided he didn't want the HAZARD album coming out as a HAZARD project as he's moving away from dark soundtracks, to more experimental noise recordings, which certainly suit his new label. Hopefully it will be released at some point, the sleeve is beautiful - we're considering releasing it under the MORTHOUND name, to distinguish it from HAZARD and his new musical direction. Hopefully, it'll be resolved soon.

Speaking of new releases, what tasty items do you already have in the wings for release on Cold Spring in the next 12 months? Well, there's a couple of *big* names that are considering allowing releases via COLD SPRING, but I don't want to jinx my chances by mentioning them just yet. Things I will mention - the FOLKSTORM - 'Victory Or Death' CD is out now, with massive interest from all areas, and then we have the INADE-'Aldebaran' CD reissue, the original sold out years ago, and its still in demand. Then, we release the GENESIS P-ORRIDGE & Z'EV - 'Direction Ov Travel' CD, with new text from both of them, and never before seen photos. KEROVNIANS second album, 'From The Depths Of Haron', will emerge soon, the debut completely sold out straight away. The second album from VON THRONSTAHL. ENDVRA - 'Contra Mvndvm' is still being recorded, and I know that many people are looking forward to that, some new PSYCHIC TV albums featuring never before heard material, plus reissuing PSYCHIC TV - 'Those Who Do Not' and 'Themes Two' albums, as they're long sold out. We've just signed a fantastic new project, called SLEEP RESEARCH FACILITY on the strength of a demo. Their album is called 'NOSTROMO' and is based on the first 8 minutes of the film ALIEN, with the massive deep-space haulage vessel drifting through space. The album is divided into 5 tracks titled DECK A - E, and is absolutely immense dark soundtrack music. This will be a big one. Also, talking to Adi Newton of CLOCK DVA / THE ANTI GROUP about releasing new ANTI GROUP material. So, lots to come....

Justin, thanks for your input. Last words? Thanks for the interest, and please check out the revamped website at <http://www.coldspring.co.uk> - all the latest news is on their or join the discussion group at www.onelist.com/subscribe.cgi/coldspring - that's where the latest news is posted, and also rare mail order items are first offered.





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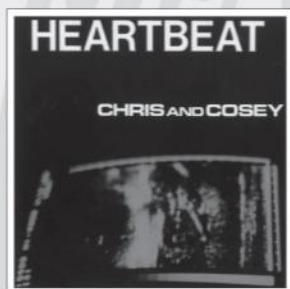


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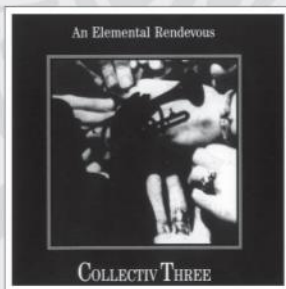
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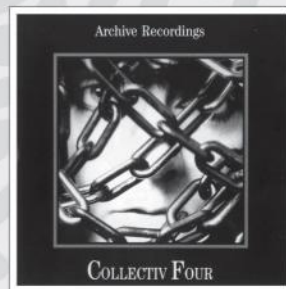
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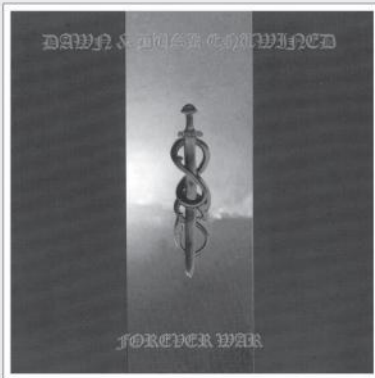
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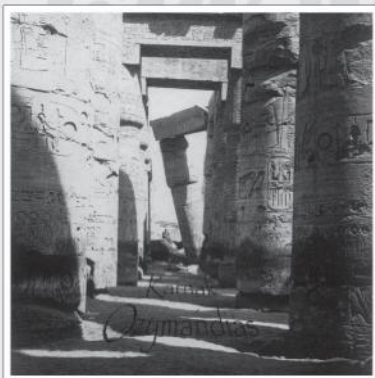
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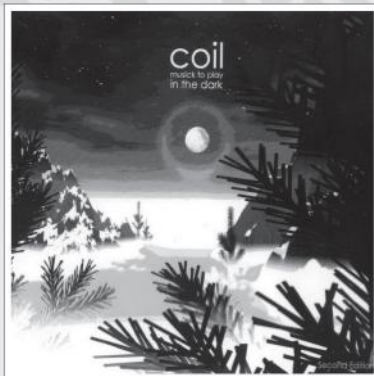
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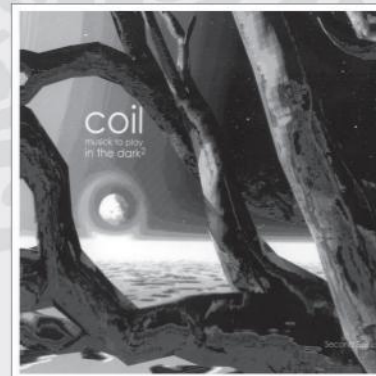
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gruntsplatter

For those unaware Gruntsplatter are one in a growing scene of American artists exploring the sonic territories of death ambience/ death industrial, yet with the recent release of his debut CD (on Crowd Control Activities) it has solidified the project as a leading flame within the bleak darkness. Taking a slightly different angle on the genre, Gruntsplatter take quite abrasive sounds and transform them to create a deceptively ambient air (that could likewise potentially signify the birth of yet another sub genre entitled 'noise ambience'). Scott E. Candey offered up some thoughts and opinions in response to my line of questioning.....

It appears that you (not you specifically but your project) have the dubious distinction of being named in the Dodgy Group Names column of The Wire Magazine. In my mind there could be both a violent or sexual connotation to the moniker, of which neither of these seem totally relevant to the actual output of the project. What are your thoughts on the use of this name?

Gruntsplatter surfacing in The Wire is certainly nothing I ever would have expected... I took the name in 1994/95 when I first started doing purely noise/experimental tracks, and back then I had next to nothing for gear, and the tracks were more violent and abrasive because of the means of recording and my general inexperience. Most of the first Gruntsplatter release, a split cassette with Torture Chamber (who eventually fractured into Deathpile) was done with a mic and couple distortion pedals and my voice. I think some of the depth that I have always tried to incorporate was there then, but the atmosphere was harsher overall. The name fit then much more so than it does now at least at first glance. After I started developing my sound more I briefly entertained the idea of changing the name, but I like the name, and the more I thought about the other connotations the name could have beyond the obvious non-descript violence I decided I needed to keep it. Recently I've had a few people tell me they always thought it was a grindcore band or a gore band or something because of the name, but whatever. I like that it's not typical of what I do, and if not being easy to figure out costs me a few listeners because it doesn't jump out at them as being dark ambient or something, I don't really care honestly.

While some might think that your track titles simply adhere to certain aspects of what is expected with death industrial type music, and while I believe that this may be the case for some titles, there are others which have a much deeper personal meaning. Can you elaborate on this and the specific titles in question?

Particularly on "The Death Fires" this is true. The titles are actually more typical on the that record I think, but the whole release ended up being a vent for a couple of recent deaths in my family. For instance, "Against The Dying Of The Light" aside from the obvious literary reference relates to my grandfathers last days alive. He was describes to me as angry and resentful that his time was up. Even though he was sick and weak he wanted more time to think about whatever it was he thought about and to just live, and when he realized that time wasn't coming he was upset. Conversely, "Waiting On The Body" relates to my grandmother, who survived him, but in doing so seemed to have just given up on life. She began obsessing on dying and ultimately I think willed herself to death. "When They Go" was recorded immediately after getting the call that my grandmother had died. That sunken feeling that comes with the news that someone you care about has died, even when you expect it and even when it may even be a good thing, there is that sunken, thick tongued resignation. Other tracks on the album have significance as well, but those three in particular are probably the most personal of anything I have done thus far.

Likewise what is your normal process of writing - does track title influence sound or vice versa?

Sometimes one sometimes the other...

I keep a list of title ideas that I think up, or see or hear in books or films or whatever, evocative phrases

etc. and sometimes I'll choose one I want to try and personify. Other times, I'll write a track and have to listen to it several times before I get an impression of what the title should be. In those instances it's usually whatever visual impression I get from the music at the time. I think titles are important, despite being completely arbitrary for this style of music, it's another way to shape the presentation of the project.

The progress that you have shown between your early split CD's to the 7" and now to the debut full length CD has been quite impressive. Has this been a case of simply honing your skills or an improvement in equipment or both?

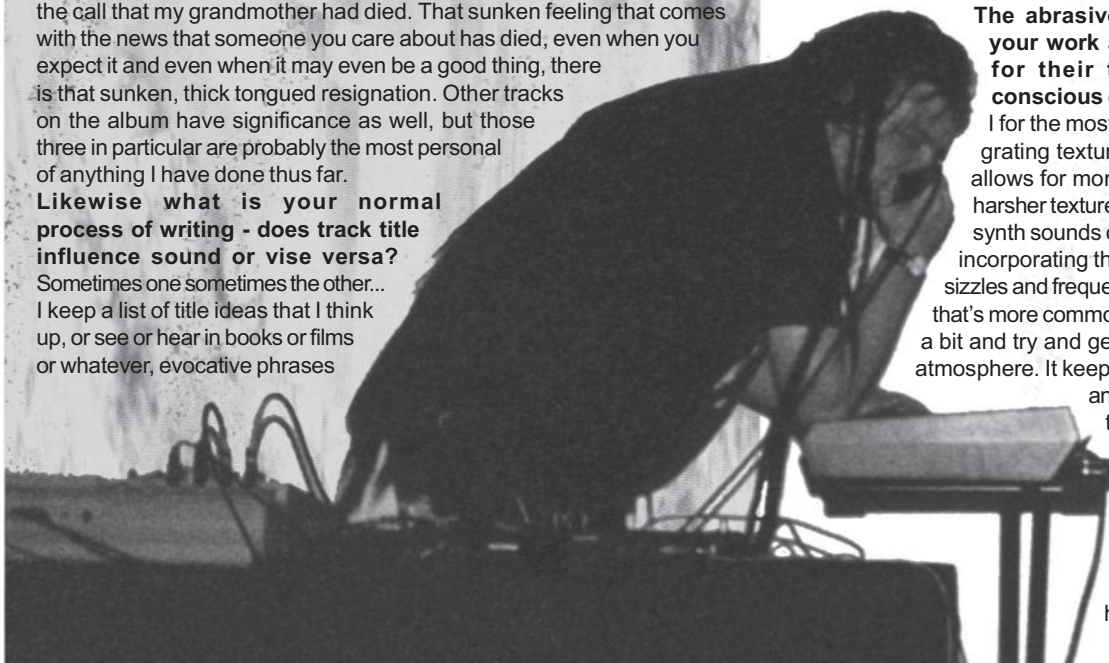
I'd say both... the biggest difference between the two split CD's, with Ruhr Hunter and Slowvent respectively, is that both of those were recorded on a 4 track. And the "Pest Maiden" 7" and "The Death Fires" were recorded on hard disc so I had access to more tracks and it allowed me to do much more than I could have on the 4 track. So that more than anything is what helped me develop the sound further, I was finally able to do things that I'd wanted to do all along. Another thing, particularly on the full length was that I started playing live, and in doing that was reminded of techniques I hadn't used in a long time, going back to when I had bare bones for equipment. So that reintroduced some things that weren't on the previous split CD's and it definitely expanded the sound I think. And of course the more you do the more tricks you learn.

How did you become involved within the underground death industrial/ noise scene? The first Noise record I bought if I remember correctly was Controlled Bleeding's "Hog Floor" I'd been involved in the Metal Underground, and liked a lot of the Industrial music at the time, and punk from way back so I just kept looking for new things to listen to. I had always been partial to discord whether it be raunchy Greg Ginn guitar solos in Black Flag, or VoiVod's odd riffing, to Neubauten's junk industrial majesty. Noise was just the natural evolution of all of that for me and I warmed right up to it. Already familiar with the letter writing, flyer spreading, tape trading ideals from the metal underground I took it all in stride, and started contacting people and digging for releases wherever I could find them. Eventually I started recording as Gruntsplatter when I realized I'd made more noise tracks for my guitar project than guitar tracks. And a lot of that ended up on the "Bisect" cassette with Torture Chamber. I still love Black Flag and VoiVod and Neubauten, and a lot of the other stuff from before I found noise. As most people in this scene I imagine, I am just a fiend for music, and experimental music for me is the most pure, it allows for things that structure can not, that scales can not and it is visual and personal, no one walks away with the same thing from a noise track.

The abrasiveness of many of the tones of your work are uncharacteristically ambient for their tone and pitch. Was this a conscious effort on your part?

Yes definitely, I for the most part, have always tried to use more grating textures in an ambient way. I think that it allows for more detail in the sound when you use harsher textures atmospherically, straight tones and synth sounds can only carry so much I think and by incorporating the more abrasive stuff you get all the sizzles and frequency manipulations and whatever else that's more common to harsher noise but I restrain them a bit and try and generate a more dark ambient sort of atmosphere. It keeps it more interesting for me to make, and ultimately it's what I personally want to hear.

Do you have a clear concept or sound in your head prior to recording or do the tracks form themselves over periods of experimentation and improvisation? Occasionally I have something more concrete in mind





when I sit down to work on music, but more often than not it's just a vague idea that I want to capture and then as I start putting the rudimentary sounds together it begins to take direction. Recently I have been doing a lot of "live in the studio" stuff that is pure improv and some good things have come of it I think, so in the future I may use improv as foundation and build from there or something I don't know. Taking Gruntsplatter into the live show realm has really done a lot for my recording process, that surfaced somewhat on "The Death Fires" but I think it will become an increasing part of what I'm doing. The energy and spontaneity of being on the spot and improvising everything and still trying to capture the feel of my recorded stuff has forced me to look at the way I do things and seek new ways to go about some of it, which to some degree I had stopped doing. It also shifted my thinking back away from "electronics" to more organic types of things which has been great, I started doing things entirely organic out of necessity and as I got a little equipment I stopped using a lot of that sort of thing, now I'm trying to integrate them a lot more.

The first track off 'the death fires' saw the introduction of a subdued keyboard passage. Is this more melodic approach something you will more thoroughly explore on future works?

Well, this isn't really the first time I'd done that, the split with Slowvent had a couple of pieces that had some obscured melody, and I have a couple tracks that were never released that use it as well. I'm sure I will use it more in the future, sometimes I just feel like their needs to be something like that to help shape my intent. And it adds another dimension and element of depth to the tracks I think which I'm all for. I don't see myself doing that stuff exclusively anytime soon, but it will always have its place.

It would seem that you are officially signed with Crowd Control Activities for Gruntsplatter output. Does this preclude you working with other labels and prior to signing with CCA did you have other label interest?

My arrangement with Crowd Control is that we have agreed to an unspecified quantity of multiple releases, in other words there will be more, but I don't know how many. When he asked me to sign with CCA he was looking to start building more long lasting relationships with his artists rather than just a bunch of one offs. You see it in every other style of music but this one and it is something I have always thought was a good idea. You begin to associate bands with labels and labels with bands and ultimately I think everyone benefits. The arrangement is that CCA will release all Gruntsplatter CD's until whenever one of us decides to terminate the relationship, but I am free to do any vinyl or cassettes that may come along. Prior to my agreement with Crowd Control I had a split release on Glass Throat, which is the material that got CCA interested in me. And I released the Gruntsplatter/Slowvent in-between the CD on Glass Throat and finishing anything for CCA, plus the 7" on Troniks.

As your music does not align itself with or tend to express any political views or specific agendas, but could you divulge some aspects of your worldview?

My worldview... basically I guess I see things like conviction, intelligence, strength, inquisitiveness, responsibility, loyalty, honesty etc. as being valuable traits and I see much of that lacking in the world. As a general rule, I don't like people, and find them all too frequently to be a waste of energy, so I have a close group of people that I associate with and leave it at that. Speaking in a larger sense, my political views reflect, my personal views ultimately. I don't like the professional victims and whiners that are spawned by the social systems that the United States keeps in place, I don't like seeing people who do nothing and take no responsibility sitting with their hands out talking about what they are entitled to. I pay attention to current events with a fascination, particularly relating to environmental issues, unrest and creepy big government stuff. It's a bit difficult to summarize concisely I guess...

What type of recording process do you utilize and do you particularly work within the studio medium? If not do you think this would provide you with advantages you might not otherwise have?

My studio is basically just a corner in my apartment. Within the last year or so I upgraded to Hard Disk recording from a 4 track, so that has helped monumentally. I began recording via my computer which allows me many more tracks to play with, and a much cleaner production. The benefits this new situation has birthed I think are obvious when you listen to the depth and sound quality of the newer stuff next to the older material. I just recently bought a new mixer for live applications, but in messing with it I definitely see it as a useful recording tool as well. I feel like I'm finally getting to a point where I can do what I've been trying to do all along. Obviously the 4 track had limitations and those limitations aren't an issue anymore and that coupled with the live stuff and reassessment of approach I mentioned earlier is keeping the recording process interesting and expansive for me right now.

When you reference playing live above, I wonder to if there is much interest let alone opportunity for such a project as yours to perform in a live medium? (given interest in death industrial music is quite sparsely spread across the globe). What entails a Gruntsplatter performance both sonically and aesthetically?

I think the interest is there, at least enough so to make it worth the effort. Certainly not frequent shows like a metal band or industrial band might be able to maintain. But for occasional performances I've seen pretty good turn out for this sort of thing. At this stage I have done two Gruntsplatter performances, and one show under the Umbra moniker when Stephen Petrus, who I do the project with was out visiting from Ohio. The Umbra and the first Gruntsplatter show was basically me standing at a table, but the last Gruntsplatter show I was able to do some video stuff that seemed to go over really well, from the reactions I got afterwards. Ideally I'd like to always have something for people to watch like that because it makes the whole thing much more engaging and adds an entirely different atmosphere to the set. As far as music I improvise everything, I don't do album tracks or anything so each one is completely unique. I generally use an atmospheric loop for foundation and then everything else is made up on the spot. My set from Troniksfest I is going to be released in an edited form as a split LP with Control, who also played Troniksfest. I have another show August 19th with Blood Box, Nothing, Control, Sickness and Petit Mal that I'm really looking forward to. I am planning to have a couple new gadgets for that so that I can give the stuff even more depth and I'll be using video then as well.

Also what is the local 'scene' like in the area you reside and generally what type of reaction can you expect/ or have experienced from audiences?

San Francisco is more supportive of experimental music than most cities I think. There are two venues here that host regular noise shows, and a couple others in the area that have them from time to time. Turnout varies, at the first Troniksfest the estimate was that over the course of the night there were about 150 people there which is damn

good in my mind. Reactions have been great to the Gruntsplatter shows, there is a core group of people that seem to really try and come out and support what is going on. My first show I opened for the Industrial bands Scar Tissue and SMP, and even that crowd was pretty receptive to what I did, so I think I'm pretty fortunate to live somewhere where there are opportunities to play and an audience that will support it.

Earlier in the interview you mentioned that the first Gruntsplatter recordings consisted of contact mics, distortion pedals and your voice, yet current output is all but void of vocalisations. Were your vocals used as merely a sound source or actually conveying lyrics and ideas? Actually this isn't true, the new record has layers of vocals on many of the tracks. They are obscured considerably, but in the right listening environment they do creep out here and there. I wanted to essentially treat them like another texture, keep them very subtle, but I think "Below the Stones" has something like 7 layers of vocals that actually have lyrics, all improvised, but it's not just non-descript noises. But yes there are no obvious vocals. The old material used both abstract vocalizations and obscured lyrics. I can see myself bringing vocals more to the forefront on rare occasions in the future. But I like having them buried among the other textures because they give more depth to the pieces than if I'm just shouting over the top of it all. And by burying them I can make the tracks as personal as I want without pointing the listener in a specific direction, which is something I like. You listen to Whitehouse or something, while I love them, there is little room for interpretation. I generally try and make it so if there are vocals that are discernable it is only fragments, not something spelling out the concepts.

What are your views of utilising vocals/ speeches or even samples in Gruntsplatter's current sound and direction? On the first cassette I used a fair amount of samples, and I haven't used them at all since then. It was basically a way for me to fill holes left by my lack of equipment. I don't have anything against them, they can be used very effectively, but I think in my more recent stuff I've avoided them, and this goes back to what I was saying above, I just don't want to be too literal with what I'm doing, and samples are something concrete that anchors the sounds to an idea. Some of my other projects have included them, though not by my hand, and I think they work great in those tracks. They just don't really fit into what I want to accomplish with Gruntsplatter as it stands more recently. Vocals as I said I will continue to use in some form or another.

What is your status of your living environment and does this play an influential role in the sounds of Gruntsplatter? I don't think my living environment plays a direct role in my music, but indirectly I'm sure it does. I live in San Francisco, and there are a lot of people here, there are all the problems you expect to find in a big city, and that certainly riles my contempt which eventually finds its way into my music I think. Our environment influences us whether we expect it to or not, if I was living in the middle of nowhere without the constant stimulus of the city I'd imagine things would sound a bit different. I don't look to my environment for influence, but its natural impact on my opinions and emotions is undeniable.

What drew you to seek out Thomas Dimuzio to master your debut full length? What were the impressions you got when working with him and are you satisfied with the results? I had been to a "pro-studio" to master the Gruntsplatter/Slowvent Split CD and felt like the guy just wanted to be done with it because I'm sure in his mind it wasn't "real music". So when it came time to do my full length I wanted to use someone who would give it the appropriate attention. Thomas doesn't live far from my house, and while I had never spoken with him previous to this I knew that his experience with the genre would greatly benefit the mastering process. I sat with him through the whole thing and was able to make suggestions and see that he very clearly knows what he's doing. I'd have no hesitation in going to Thomas again for my material, and have used him to master releases for Crionic Mind in the time since he did "The Death Fires". He's professional and fast and focused on what you have in mind for your music, not what he has in mind for your music.

In that most artists within the underground scene seem to work with a side-project or two, in your example they come in the form of collaborative works. Can you provide some details of these groups you are currently working with as opposed to those that may be defunct? What you are able to, or aiming to achieve via these projects that you feel cannot be covered by your outputs with Gruntsplatter? I have done 3 collaborations with releases available so far. The first was Blunt Force Trauma with Jon Canady of Deathpile. This was a Harsh Noise collab that we did back in 1997, and it's still available from various distributors. This one is definitely in hibernation, but I hesitate to say it's defunct. We haven't done anything since the "Bled Out" CD, but I'd like to see one more release from this project at some point. Triage was the next, and least from a planning stage, this is a collaboration with Chet Scott from Ruhr Hunter, the focus of this one is more analog driven, sterile cold atmospheres and pulses, and this project is alive and well. The first release "The Cessation of Spoil" has done really well, and generated a bit of label interest, so Chet is working on his portion of the follow up right now and then I get it and we'll see if those that were interested are still interested I guess. And the last one is Umbra, this is with Stephen Petrus of In Death's Throes, and its focus is on a sort of low fi dark ambient/death industrial. This one is probably most similar to what I do as Gruntsplatter, but I think it carries a completely different feel. This project is still alive as well, Stephen is working on his stuff for a follow up to "Unclean Spirit" and I'll start on mine soon. I just found out a couple days ago that someone is interested in releasing the next Umbra disc, so that will hopefully have a home when we are done with it. Currently I'm working on a project with Jason Walton of Nothing, we are still solidifying ideas, but the general direction for this one will be almost like electronic Doom Metal - with a heavy dose of experimentation. Derek Rush of Dream Into Dust and I have discussed doing something together as well, but we can't seem to work it into our schedules because he's got just as many things he's working on as I do... I have a side project called Grimes as well, that's just me, that one is more beat focused than any of the other projects. The thing I like about the side projects is the freedom to wander into things that I don't feel quite fit what I want to present as Gruntsplatter, and of course I get to work with people that I like and respect, which is always interesting.

Lastly do you want to give a bit of information on the background and future direction of your label Crionic Mind? Crionic Mind is finally getting to the point where I feel like I'm starting to do what I set out to do. This year will be the first time that I'm consistently able to put out releases, and have some things I'm really excited about doing. I released Lefthandeddecision's "Instinct & Emotion" in April and it's over 3/4 gone already, next up is Deison's "Dirty Blind Vortex" which will be going to the plant anyway now and should already be available by the time this makes the presses. Right after that will be a split CD from KK Null and Moz, which also may be out by the time this is, depending on how quickly the art comes together. Around late October I'll be releasing "Wither" from a project called Wilt, that I'm really looking forward to, and then finally around February or so I'm planning a CD from a relatively new project called Never Presence Forever. After that I don't know exactly, but I have a couple ideas taking shape. I have been doing the distribution for 5-6 years, and released a couple of cassettes, and the Gruntsplatter/Slowvent CD, but being able to maintain a steady release schedule and do releases beyond my own music was the goal from the beginning.

Scott, thanks very much for your input...



YEN POX

When trying to think what I could write for a Yen Pox introduction, all that popped into my mind was the first review I read of their music before I actually heard their awe inspiring dark ambient sonics. Thus, rather than reinventing the wheel (void!?) why not simply quote some of those words? *".... you're transported off into a vacuumous black hole, deposited and left to swim in an endless downward spiraling void....Dense, droney and radiant with dark energy – as if the sun were suddenly eclipsed by a looming, blood red orb and the world were cast under a liquidous murky glow."* (Audio Drudge 7#). Steve Hall and Michael JV Hensley being both members of the group contributed to this quite lengthy transcript soon after the release of their second stunning CD "new dark age".

First up can you introduce yourselves and provide some brief background information regarding your who/ what/ where statuses? (just so the readers and I can better analysis and dissect you later question responses!). STEVE: Hello. I'm Steve Hall, I'm from New Paris, IN (about 2 hours out of Chicago, IL). MICHAEL: I, michaeljvhensley, live in Seattle, WA. When Steve and I began Yen Pox, I also lived in Indiana, but I had to leave, or lose my mind. I saw no reason to let distance keep Steve and I from recording together.

Why the name Yen Pox and what if anything does you music have to do with the opium trade? STEVE: It has absolutely nothing to do with the opium trade. When Mike and I were in the process of creating the first Self-titled cassette, we were reading quite a bit of William Burroughs works. I lent my copy of "Junky" to Mike, who upon reading the book, pulled the term from it. In Burroughs' book, it refers to the opium ash (which supposedly has just as much chemical potency as heroin), which is cooked and injected just as heroin would be. The words themselves had a certain ring to them and the drug reference was fitting as well. A soundtrack to the visual of someone shooting a thick black ooze into their vein. I think music itself can produce altered states of awareness, to a certain level. Put on your headphones and shut everything else out and you'll feel it.

Given that you have taken the classic Lustmord dark ambient sound and elevated it further, I wanted to ask if Lustmord was a specific influence that you would acknowledge? What other groups would you mark as inspiration for Yen Pox? STEVE: Michael first introduced me to Lustmord's material, it was "the Monstrous Soul". Great stuff, but I wouldn't really say that it was an influence. I've always had a penchant for music that has a dark, minor key sound, whether it be metal, classical, ambient, etc. Probably on of the biggest influences for me was SWANS. That's the band that really pushed me over the edge into a truly dark realm musically, particularly "Children of God" and the "Raping a Slave" e.p. Aside from that, and Mike may or may not agree, our perception of our own surroundings have a big influence....."The empty blue Indiana sky".

MICHAEL: Actually, I don't think my surroundings influence my sound much these days. My surroundings when I record are just my cramped, claustrophobic apartment, which affects my work habits more than anything. With this music, I don't really feel like I am particularly influenced by much of anything, besides the voices in my head. Perhaps when I first started, I'm sure I was influenced by something, but now I just do what I do, it just comes naturally to me. I must admit that I've never completely understood the numerous Lustmord comparisons we get. I won't deny that was an early influence, inasmuch as it was among the many noise and ambient bands I was listening to before I started creating my own sound, but I don't consider this a major inspiration, just one amongst many. It would seem that the comparison is just an easy way for people to label our sound, when the reality that I see is that while we may definitely create a similar style of music to Lustmord, in the same genre, I really don't think our music sounds the same at all. Actually, the closest I think we've come to sounding like Lustmord is his collaboration with Robert Rich, "Stalker", but as that was recorded at about the same time as our "Blood Music" CD, it obviously had no influence on us. I think Robert Rich added some density and emotional depth to their collaboration, qualities I feel we have, that I have found lacking in much of Lustmord's music. Of course, I'm just guessing, as I have heard very little of Rich's music before. Other early influences for me were Coil, C.T.I., The Art Barbecue (anyone remember that album?) and a lot of compilations like the Dry Lungs series, although none of this is obvious in our sound.

I believe that you both live extreme distances from each other, but was this always the case? How did you come to meet and at what point did you decide to collaborate on a dark ambient project? STEVE: Yes, we now live about 2200 miles apart, however, there was a time when we only lived a few miles apart. We were introduced to each other by a mutual friend, Joel Bender (BELT). At the time, we were both working on other musical projects, but about 2 years later, we decided to get together one afternoon and collaborate and see what happened....that afternoon, YEN POX was born. MICHAEL: Actually, before we collaborated on Yen Pox, I have vague, smoke-obscured memories of going over to Steve's house while he and his "rock" band, Used, were practicing, taking my sampler over, and just recording improvisational, feedback, rhythm 'n noize freakouts, or sometimes I'd just throw out some vocals for the band. I can't really attest to the quality of these sessions (although I think I have a tape somewhere), it was just good clean fun. It was a natural progression from there for Steve and I to start getting together to record what would become the Yen Pox s/t cassette. This was really just "something to do", for ourselves, we didn't have a particular agenda in mind, just a way pass the empty Indiana weekends. It was this process that caused Yen Pox to come to fruition sooner than my solo material, which I spent more time "honing" and testing to see which direction I wanted to go with it. Much less thought went into Yen Pox, just get together and record. I think we were lucky with these early recordings, we really didn't know what we were doing, everything just came together perfectly, it was very natural.

Further to the above can you both please list your musical backgrounds that lead to the formation of the group? STEVE: I studied classical piano and organ for 5 years, when I was living in Oregon. Upon moving to Indiana, I quit my musical studies and attempted the formation of a couple of rock bands with high school acquaintances, which failed miserably as they usually do. After high school I moved to New Paris and was introduced to Joel Bender, who was interested in doing something serious musically. We met up one evening, Joel with his guitar and myself with my keyboard and nothing really inspiring happened. The next time we got together, I picked up a bass that Joel had at his place and that's when the inspiration started to flow. BELT was born. We did the first 7" e.p. "Exposure to Gunfire" (500 copies) which sold fairly well, mainly thanks to AJAX records distribution, and got some BBC airplay, thanks to John Peel. Prior to Joel's exodus from Indiana, I quit BELT, to continue the rock-based sound that Joel was now moving away from (eventually I did as well). It began with myself, a bass and drum machine. After a few months I met up with guitarist Traig Foltz and soon after we incorporated a live drummer named Marc Cupp. We called ourselves USED. We released an e.p. "How to Crawl", played a few shows locally and eventually played the Lab Stage at one of the Lollapalooza dates in Michigan in 1996, after which our drummer disappeared and the band fell apart, a common scenario among bands with more than 2 differing personalities fueled by excessive pot smoking and alcohol consumption, ultimately leading to a lack of focus, to which a band cannot survive without. MICHAEL: I had a couple of other friends making their own noise-ambient-electronic music, Joel Bender was one of them, and this really inspired me to buy some equipment and try it myself. Basically, I needed a hobby, some sort of creative outlet, or I was going to literally lose my mind, I had spent 3 years doing nothing but testing the limits of intoxication, and needed something else. Music was it.

Much like the slow movement and evolution of Yen Pox's soundscapes, your release schedule has been similarly at a snails pace. What is it with the compositional process that results in such large expanses of time elapsing between recordings? STEVE: Some of this has to do with the distance between us. I think if Mike and I lived closer, things might move a little faster, but this is only minimal. The main reason the process takes so long is that we become increasingly critical of our work with each new release, in an effort to exceed the level of musical content

as well as the sound quality. In addition, the mixing aspect of the process has been left to Michael as he's the one who has the superior recording equipment. MICHAEL: Yeah, things would definitely be different if we still lived in the same area, we'd probably have a couple of more lps to our credit. After the "Blood Music" cd, I wanted to take some time to work on Blood Box, which I felt had been unintentionally eclipsed by Yen Pox, so I wanted to get that out there. Then I moved from Denver to Seattle, which disrupted me for a while. At this point the recording process had completely changed too, the next album would be recorded completely apart, trading tapes in the mail. This process ended up taking a year longer than we had planned to finish, then over a year after that to get released. So if both we and our label had been able to do this as planned, we would have had this cd out a couple of years ago, though it would have sounded completely different. It's also true that I've gotten really picky in the past few years, it can be a real problem for me, I spend so much time on production and recording, that it gets to the point that nothing sounds good to me anymore. Then I get burnt out and lose interest for a while, it's become a pattern with me. Also, over the past couple of years, we've both been getting new equipment, which takes time away from the recording process while we learn to use it. I foresee more regular output from Yen Pox, as well as our respective solo work from this point, we both have better tools now.

Typical of almost all underground music there is a dark quality to output, with Yen Pox certainly adhering to this principle. What are you attempting to convey with your soundscapes as both your titles 'Blood Music' and 'New Dark Age' would tend to hint at some inherent philosophy. Is this the case?

MICHAEL: I don't believe in putting forth any kind of message or philosophy or dogma or belief system with the music, I really don't like that trait in bands and music. I really hate it when bands lay out some grand statement or obvious message with their music, using it as a podium to transmit their unsolicited opinions. For me, music is purely an emotional, sensory, aesthetic medium, and the titles we use are chosen more for their aesthetic value than anything, we just try to use words that sound good, look good, and represent what the music sounds like to us. I don't think it's possible to do much more when you are creating music without lyrics. This is not to say I don't think much about the titles, exactly the opposite, all too often I hear great music with bad song titles that sound like no thought was put into them at all, and it's really important to me that the song and album titles are as powerful as the music they represent. I like the music to be cinematic, tell a story, sometimes fantasy, sometimes reality, just as long as you go somewhere else for a while.

Please details what are your personal thoughts on your two full length releases thus far and what do you think are their strengths and weaknesses of each?

MICHAEL: Mmm, that's a tough one. I guess I like Blood Music more, unlike the cassette, I don't think we had any filler on this one, it's more layered, and I feel, a little more emotionally intense. I like how there's always something new to discover on these, lots of subtle transitions and sounds that are not always obvious. On the other hand, some would say this music is too subtle, this music is not for the impatient or those demanding instant gratification. I remember taking some copies of Blood Music to a store here that specialized in noise and whatnot, but the guy there was unaware of our music, wanted to hear a bit before agreeing to sell it. So he threw a copy in, then starts fast forwarding to random points on the cd, listening to about 10 seconds, then skipping some more. Really frustrating, I had to tell him he wasn't going to learn anything that way, it's music that needs a focused listen to appreciate. I often wish I was able to create more instantly commanding music, something that doesn't take so much concentration to enjoy. Probably, for my tastes now, the only thing I would change on these releases, would be the production, there's a lot of room for improvement there, and we will actually be doing that sometime soon, remixing and mastering both of these, it should really revitalize these, creating very different albums while retaining the qualities and sounds that made them great in the first place. I do think we've perfected our sound on the New Dark Age cd, I'm really happy with the sound quality and mix on this release, it's heads above our previous output in terms of sound quality.

Given that the 'New Dark Age' CD was in the 'forthcoming' release pipeline for quite a length of time, have you forged ahead in compositional writing for future release?

STEVE: No. There is still a collaboration between YEN POX and TROUM which will be out soon as well, however the recordings have been done for some time now and it's being mixed down now. Mike and I are both working on our solo projects now that "New Dark Age" is completed. It may be another 2-3 years before any NEW Yen Pox material is completed, however, we plan to rerelease the 1st Self-titled cassette in the very near future. MICHAEL: I definitely hope that it doesn't take that long to get our next album finished, I could be dead before then, I don't want to waste so much time on the next one. Basically, when Steve is ready, I'll start recording material. Maybe even sooner. STEVE: Sounds like we're ready.

Your song titles do reflect their atmospheric qualities, however which eventuates first - sound or words?

STEVE: Most of the titles are Michael's creations, aside from the Drone 7" and maybe half of the 1st cassette. As far as the titles I have come up with, it's always the sound that comes first. From there, I can sit back and absorb the sound and see what concepts/daydreams/nightmares come to mind and cull the titles from those images. MICHAEL: Anytime I think of, or read, something that is good title material, I'll write it down, then when the music is finished, I'll look through these to find a good match. With the New Dark Age cd, the titles were sort of independent of the music, and were rearranged freely to create a literary construction that appealed to me, and more accurately matched the "story" that I felt the music projected to me, personally.

Is work on Yen Pox material an even 50/50 split? Do either of you specialize on particular facets of the writing/ recording process?

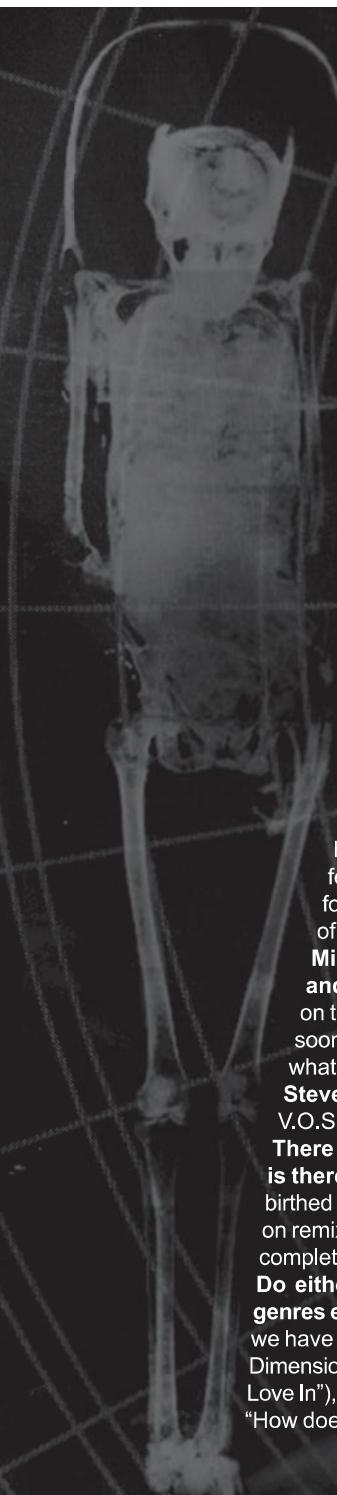
STEVE: As stated earlier, the mixing process has been left to Michael in the past, however, since I've recently upgraded to a digital system, there will be more delegation of this in the future, which may or may not help speed the process a bit. Michael is the visionary when it comes to the artwork also. I've concentrated my efforts more toward the sound. MICHAEL: Yeah, I've kind of been on the tail end of the arrangement and mixing in the past, and I'm really looking forward to letting Steve take over some of that now. As with every other release, it will really change the way our next album is recorded and constructed, it will be interesting to see how this changes our sound.

How much improvisation if at all is part of Yen Pox's works?

STEVE: A majority of the material I create for Yen Pox is improvised. I find that when the inspiration is there, it just flows. Maybe a second take sometimes, but usually I'll be playing around with a sound on an instrument, which then becomes a pattern, then hit record on the DAT. MICHAEL: Depends on your definition of improvisation. I continue to spend more and more time on my sounds and tracks, and a lot more preparation goes into my music, but sometimes I'll just be messing around, get a sound, turn on the multi-track and go, and not mess with things too much. Especially since I've started getting into analog synths more, and I'm not trying to create specific melodies or patterns, these lend themselves more to the "twist-some-knobs-and-see-what-happens" mindset. I'd say it's a good mix of improvising and calculated construction.

Where do you derive your source material from that forms the basis of Yen Pox material and what are some of the more unusual sound sources you have found/ used? Likewise do you use traditional equipment such as synthesizers and samplers?

STEVE: Do we give away our trade secrets Mike? For "New Dark Age" I used a couple of old Ensoniq samplers and a Synth module....this release was created with more electronic equipment than in the past. For the prior releases, we used various string instruments, vocals, percussive objects along with a very limited amount of samples, mainly just looped sounds. I guess some of the more unusual sounds sources were a milk jug and the sound of traffic. Any others you can think of Mike? MICHAEL: For me, it's always been about samplers and effects, and more recently, I've been getting into synthesizers. Early on, my sampler was pretty limited, but I had a great effects processor, so we focused on using sounds, any sounds we could, to trigger the effects. Some of our sounds on there own sounded, well, not very good, but it didn't matter as long as the effects hid the sound. Now though, I'm much more focused on using a good sound and just using the effects for enhancement. Up till "New Dark Age", samples accounted for only about a quarter, at most, of our material. Mostly we would use processed bass, vocals, and like Steve said, anything we could use to make a



sound. Even now, using more samples, we don't just rip things off, if we sample someone else's music or movie stuff, we'll transform it into something different. You'd never catch me sampling similar music, I prefer to sample things that have no comparison to what I do, like Journey or the Beach Boys, and force it to do things my way.

Do you currently work with a digital computer medium for your new recordings, and has this differed from early material? STEVE: "New Dark Age" was recorded on a digital medium, not computer based though, and the sound quality far exceeds "Blood Music". Very clean.

How has changing equipment changed how you approach writing for the group? What types of equipment do you hope to utilize in future and would a formal studio setting be of any benefit? STEVE: Changing musical equipment really doesn't change my approach to the writing process. As we have gone to using a little more electronic instruments (i.e. samplers/keyboards/sound modules), the only aspect of the process that changes is the extra time involved in programming, whereas, early on, we made sure the recording equipment was hooked up properly, checked the levels, and dove in head first. I think we could end up blowing a lot of money in a formal studio setting. It would be fun to see what could become of it. If we had a good engineer that was familiar with recording the kind of music we're making, it could turn out very well. If, in the near future, I upgrade to a computer-based recording system, I think we'll be able to do just fine on our own. Since Michael and I both have digital equipment now, I think there will be a noticeable difference in the next recordings as well.

Given the slow evolving process of your track it appears that there are melodies within however are extremely difficult to grasp in their entirety given the catatonic pace. Is this in fact the case and if so are these firstly composed at quicker pace then slowed appropriately into the finished compositions? STEVE: Actually these melodies are performed at a catatonic pace. You have to just breath deeply, relax and let it crawl. I can't speak for Mike, but when I'm playing I allow myself to become entranced by the sound to the point that I'm able to play at such a pace and still keep the timing tight. It's almost meditative. MICHAEL: I'm glad you hear the melodies. I happen to be drawn to melodic music, and it's important to me for there to be, on some level, some of that in our music, otherwise it would just be noise. The pace is not necessarily intended, just the way it naturally occurs, it's just the way we work.

Michael, you have a solo project by the name of Blood Box which has released one CD thus far. How do you feel this differs from Yen Pox material given that it does inhabit similar territory.? Also which project was operational first and was the similar in sounding names a bizarre coincidence? What can we expect from Blood Box in future? MICHAEL: I'm glad you called this a "solo project" and not a "side project" as I often hear it referred to as. Blood Box began basically the day I got my first sampler and recorded my first music, though I didn't come up with the name at first. And it's a complete coincidence that these names rhyme, I don't remember which name came first, but I wasn't thinking of this at the time. With Blood Box I feel more freedom to experiment with different sounds, if I want to be brutal and psychotic one day, and beautiful and angelic the next, then I will, as long as I can create some natural continuum between these styles. There will probably always be some similarity between Blood Box and Yen Pox, because my primary goal with both of these projects is basically the same. If I decide to try something too far removed from this, I will present it under a different name. Right now, I am working on a couple of different Blood Box full length releases, one will be a mix of material culled from the past 5 years, and the other will be all new. I'm really excited about getting this out, I think this is some of the best stuff I've done, hopefully I will have these finished by the end of the year, then I'm going to shop around for labels.

Michael, as I believe that you have played live with Blood Box are there any plans for both of you to present Yen Pox in the live medium? MICHAEL: At one time, I would have flatly stated "NO", but I've reconsidered that, and there may be a chance of it happening sometime, the opportunity would have to be just right. We were asked to play at this noise fest that Malignant is setting up in New York this fall, but I can't afford to go to New York right now, and it would just be very difficult to arrange. If we do a show, it would not be a chance for people to come hear our recordings played live, it would be something very different, as the semi-improvisational nature of our music would make it nearly impossible to recreate much of our work. I don't know, it could happen, we'll see.

Michael, another of your side projects was the Hollow Earth collaboration with John Canady which has released one CD thus far. Likewise is this an on going project and how did the recording/ writing process differ from your other outputs? MICHAEL: The Hollow Earth cd was recorded in much the same fashion as the Yen Pox cassette, on the weekends, purely for enjoyment, just a way to pass the time, we didn't really expect to release anything when we started. We will probably start working on some new material soon, with the addition of Tom Garrison from up-and-coming power electronics act Control. Which is not to say that our next release will power electronics, it's far to early to know exactly what will happen, though I'm sure we will have a heavier sound this time around.

Steve, do you have any side projects in the working that you would like to mention/ promote? STEVE: I'm currently working on a set of tracks that will ultimately be a full length V.O.S. release. There was talk of a split Bloodbox/V.O.S 7" as well. We'll see what becomes of it.

There was talk of re-releasing the debut Yen Pox tape on CD as the debut item via your own record label Circle 9. Obviously to date this has never eventuated however is there still plan to issue this? Has Circle 9 been birthed beyond the formative concept stage? STEVE: The rerelease will be a reality, soon. MICHAEL: Circle 9 has only been birthed if you count the first Yen Pox and the first Blood Box releases, which were officially on Circle 9. Other than that, the only thing I've done is had a nice logo designed for it. We still plan on remixing and mastering the first release, as well as an extensive reworking of the the Blood Music cd (remix, remaster, "new" music, new cover), and I'm not sure if we will release these completely on our own, or as a co-release with another label, depends on the money situation, I seem to spend it all on equipment, never have any left for a label.

Do either of you follow the underground scene of which you are derived from and who would you acknowledge as being worthwhile? Likewise what other sounds, genres etc encompass your listening time? STEVE: Lately I've been listening to MZ412's "Nordik Battle Signs", Brighter Death Now's "The Slaughterhouse", Dream into Dust's "The world we have lost" and Coil's "Music to Play in the Dark 1 and 2". Aside from these, some titles that are in frequent rotation are Soundgarden's "Badmotorfinger", Dimmu Borgir's "Spiritual Black Dimension", Alice in Chains' "Jar of Flies", Skin "The World of Skin", Swans "Children of God", Sonic Youth's "EVOL", Current 93's "Thunder Perfect Mind", Nick Cave (any up to and including "Let Love In"), Death in June's "But What Ends when the Symbols Shatter", Dead Can Dance's "Within the Realm of a Dying Sun", Jerry Goldsmith's "Planet of the Apes" filmscore, and Nancy Sinatra's "How does that grab you". As far as worthwhile artists within the "scene"... Dream into Dust, Inade, IRM, LAW (Mitchell's sound has really matured with "Vindication and Contempt"), Heid,

Bloodbox, BELT (S/HE & Killing Verdict era), Maeror Tri/Troum, Voice of Eye, and Gruntsplatter are the acts who have either made a big impression in the past or recently. MICHAEL: I would probably know next-to-nothing about the "scene" if not for friends keeping me informed, I just don't buy too much of this type of music anymore. I find that I am very picky about this stuff, even when I started, one of the reasons was that I was tired of buying what I found to be crap, there was a small handful of great releases out there, and a surplus of average, uninspired and just plain bad music in this area, I decided I could do better myself, so I did. From what I hear, at least as far as dark ambient goes, we have more competition now than when we started, there are other bands doing some great stuff in this area, but I still don't feel that there's much out there worth spending my money on, at this point in my life, my attention span is too short, and I need something more from music. Which is not to say I've abandoned it completely, lately I've been listening to Brighter Death Now, Raison D'etre, Caul, Voice of Eye, and Ordo Equilibrio, but for the most part, my tastes tend to an ever revolving and evolving diet of more "mainstream" and often conflicting styles. Lately it's been a mix of mellow trance-inducing electronic rhythms, 70's European Sleaze soundtracks, and brutal-yet-melodic teen-angst metal (and I'm really getting too old for that) and blackened metal, as well as a staple of old-school faves like Laibach, Nick Cave, Swans, Jarboe, and Foetus.

Are their any local underground/ experimental scenes to speak of in the areas you inhabit and are you at all involved in them?

STEVE: Nothing much. Every blue moon a show might be organized by an enthusiastic individual trying to generate some kind of scene other than the typical lame bar band activity, and there may even be a surprising number of people in the crowd, however there's just not enough of it. I did a V.O.S. performance in the fall of last year, just over the state line in Michigan and there was a descent crowd. Maybe as time goes by things will get better, but I'm not getting my hopes up. I'm just a couple hours out of Chicago though and there are some good shows there on occasion. I was fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to see Death in June when they came to the states a couple years ago. You just have to keep your eye's and ears open and use your resources to find out what's going on. MICHAEL: Not much that I know of, but I don't really seek that out, and they don't look for me either. Most of that "scene" here is inhabited by free jazz musicians, improv noisicians and the like, which I couldn't care less about.

What is your opinion of the vinyl verses CD format? (either related to or separate from your own releases). Also does vinyl present inherent problems when say Yen Pox is working on particularly subtle segments that may be compromised with the associated hiss and static? STEVE: As far as a sound quality is concerned, there's no comparison....the CD far exceeds vinyl, particularly with the type of music we create. If the vinyl quality is good, then the sound will be pretty damn clean, however, the quality of the vinyl medium as become neglected to a point, at least in the U.S. because it just doesn't sell as well as it used to. In Europe, they seem to take vinyl a bit more seriously. I've bought some really good "quality" vinyl releases recently, from European labels. I would never reject the opportunity to do a vinyl release, but if I was flipping the bill, I'd do the CD. Vinyl seems to have become more of a collectible item unfortunately.

Thanks for your participation. Have I missed any topics you would like to cover? MICHAEL: No, I was thinking of going on at length about Steve's disgusting personal habits, but instead I'll just give out our e-mail address in case anyone wishes to contact us. It is: circlenine@mac.com STEVE: Hey now!

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SOUND REVIEWS

ALL REVIEWS BY RICHARD STEVENSON UNLESS INDICATED OTHERWISE

Ah Cama-Sotz (Bel) "Poison" 10" EP 1999 Old Europa Cafe

Topics covered on this blue vinyl include the legacy of political assassinations under Stalin's rule and the poisoning experimentations undertaken by Lavrenti P. Beria (lovingly referred to as 'Stalin's butcher'), presented as versions 1 and 2 of the EP's title. Side A presents abrasive sweeping noise inter-spread with ominous treated keyboard sounds and treated/echoed radio voices, creating a juxtaposition of deep atmospheres and intense sounds. Retaining the same sound throughout, the layers of sounds and intensity of tones are explored over the lengthy piece. This track reminds me to an extent of the noisier tracks that Predominance have created (minus the vocals) on the Hindenburg 12" EP. More subdued overall, "Poison II" works on the same dual sound principle, yet has a more drawn-out drone production and fewer abrasive sound textures explored over its likewise lengthy course. Lastly, the cover is nothing really to get excited about, with reasonably plain visuals printed on blue card.

Ah Cama-Sotz (Bel) vs. Frames a Second (Bel) "Ankh-Deceptive Rate" 7" EP 2000 Nocturnus

Another release by this Spectre side label that sees the collaboration of two artists (each providing the other with source material, from which a track is then recorded). Ah Cama-Sotz is up first, with 'Ankh' being a mid-paced noise and beat fest, containing a certain groove to the static and programming. Sounds waiver in the mid to high sonic spectrum, acting as a backing to the increasingly overlapped beat and rhythm layers being created. Pulsating drum sequences and non-harsh static make what could certainly be an industrial dance floor number. Hitting its peak at the midway point, the track continues in this hyper fashion for the remainder of the 6 minute piece. Frames a Second's track ('Deceptive Rate') is instantly more harsh and grating, static noise outbursts and scattered vocals popping in and out randomly, with a faint hint of a beat sequence in the background. This beat element gradually claws its way to the fore, presenting as a mid to fast paced segment that is constantly built upon with more sound, static and voice samples. Running a ragged line between beat and noise, neither element ever gets the upper hand, both threatening a takeover at any point. Printed on heavy weight vinyl, complemented by a sepia-coloured cover and three insert cards (and limited to a mere 399 copies), this will surely sell fast.

Ah Cama-Sotz (Bel) "The House of the Lordh" LP 2000 Ant-Zen

This new LP encompasses the style in which I most appreciate Ah-Cama-Sotz - solemn death industrial sounds devoid of beat programming, etc. (this is not to say that his beat oriented tracks are at all bad, but that this is the sound that I tend to prefer). Slow and massive orchestral sentiments are quickly laid down with track 1 and, being rife with movie samples and deep catacomb atmospheres, the horrific nightmare aura is soon established. Scattered chiming bells, orchestral string layers and smatterings of vocals and noise layer embellishments, create another tense track on 'The Gathering'. Things really hit the mark on 'Crucifixion of the Flesh', a track that is quite comparable to In Slaughter Natives. Slow pounding percussion and deep horns are the main musical elements, also containing the obvious sinister industrial backing sounds. Atmospheres morph in intensity, shrill and warlike in intent...and I ask does it get better than this!?. The last track on side A ('Bleeding Crosses'), despite being a quite mid to fast paced composed keyboard number, does retain a dark stylistic approach to the tune, and sparse backing of noise elements. Side B features only two tracks, the first one 'Prophetic Vision' being an extremely lengthy piece. Dense and heavy in sound production, the dark ambience structure sees the sporadic use of percussive sounds and orchestral elements all thick and resonating with cavernous darkness. The extremely distorted and treated vocals that arrive mid-way through sound as if they are being spoken by the dark lord himself, and thus add quite a bleak touch. Towards the end of the track a programmed keyboard rhythm injects some urgency to the proceedings, leading into the finally with 'I:Believe'. There is certainly no disappointment either with a track of massive sweeping death industrial qualities. More vocal samples sit amongst scattered segments of dark orchestral melody that puncture the otherwise barren and desolate sonic landscape. With Salt always going that bit further with packaging and despite this being housed in a simple slip sleeve the presentation is impeccable as always. Limited to 500 I'm sure most have already missed this one.

Amoeba (USA) "Watchful" CD 2000 Release Entertainment

With the involvement of Robert Rich in this project (along with Rick Davis) I was expecting some excellent organic drone soundscape works, but I was off the mark altogether. This CD still has a very organic/earthen feel (and dare I say slightly 'new age' tinged), however this aura is evoked via traditional song structure, and the use of steel/acoustic guitars, percussion, vocals, synth, etc. The use of these elements on most of the tracks see the layers swirling in dreamy unison as the far off and fragile echo of the vocals resonate throughout the sphere of sound, all creating a sound production that is embracing and enveloping in its warmth. The cello accompaniment to 'Skin' works particularly well, solidifying the organic vibe of wood and bow against that of plastic and steel. The mood of 'Origami', although quite wrought with sorrow, has a certain prog-rock tone to the guitar without ever being a fast or uptempo song; rather it forms a short interlude to the more straight forward acoustics and highly atmospheric drumkit percussion of 'Footless'. This progressive rock sound surfaces again on the lengthy 'Ignoring Gravity', which relies much more on bass, guitar and light drumming (created with the use of brushes). 'Desolation' is introduced with drones akin to Robert's main works, here mixed with guitar and mournful vocals while 'Big Clouds' is devoid of any guitars, rather containing deep drones, scattered hand percussion, outbursts of sounds and treated vocals being the closest to an experimental track on display. 'Saragossa' is the most up-tempo and folk oriented piece with flutes, tribal hand percussion and that special crisp resonance that can only come from a steel guitar, all collated in the very warm, dreamy, atmospheric sound production. One comparison I could definitely make would be to the beautiful works of the group 'The 3rd and Mortal', and while this lacks the soaring female vocals of said group, the aura evoked is quite similar insofar as the songs are focussed on capturing and portraying selected moods. Although this is somewhat different than I expect to see coming from the ranks of Release, given their past noise/industrial offerings, this is still a great listen.

Amon (Ita) "The Legacy" CD 1999 Eibon

Andrea Marutti's third venture as Amon (he also navigates through darkened territories as Never Known) is, unquestionably, his finest, most complete work to date. A passageway carved from humming drones opens 'Sandstones'. Brittle, clamoring machinery ambience patiently moves to the forefront, as the humming drones grow more tonally rich. The track furtively shifts from its brittle beginnings, to being almost boisterous, a leviathan of unwavering sonic audacity. There is a thickness to these tones, as layers congeal amidst a murky, all-enveloping fog. The following four tracks constitute the four chapters of The Legacy cycle, exploring different facets of the drone territories. The darkness shimmers, grows more prominent during 'The Legacy I: Enter Darkness,' as low rumbles are massaged by aching winds that sink deep into the landscape of soft gray matter. Desolation of mind is featured here, midnight in the desert of decaying dreams, erosion that leads to isolation. 'The Legacy II: Machinery' really escalates the tension, as the multi-layered engines of the drone machinery grow more kinetic, tightly wound motion of a foreboding origin. The murky fog thickens to malleability, seductive in its blindfolding embrace, hinting at melodies buried way, way underneath, breathing ominously, a stentorian resonance. Pure undulating darkness, the darkness from the earth's core (or, at least, the core of the most oppressive nightmare), full-bodied, dense, and yet spacious, as sounds skitter underneath, scampering toward the furthest horizon, toward oblivion. 'The Legacy III: Domes/Colonies' is bathed in crystals whose luster is radiant, offsetting the darkness, but not the inherent solitude. It gives the solitude a chilling companion, a mocking hope awash in false light and promises unfulfilled. The crystals carve a serrated edged cavity into the drones. 'The Legacy IV: Exit Light' leads one back to the light, but this is not a comforting ascent, rather alien to be quite honest. A distinctive, piercing drone seems reminiscent of a like-minded, somber drone from The Day The Earth Stood Still, or some such science fiction movie that I cannot quite place, but it's there...I know it's there... The final track, seeking refuge beyond the Legacy quartet, 'Amunhaptra', is not a peaceful finale. The ambience seems haunted, as jittery tones reflect off of abandoned machinery, all the while swelling and mutating, rising like defiant shadows in a warehouse graveyard (mysterious, hinting at deception and discomfort)... With The Legacy, Amon solidify their status as one of the finest purveyors of drone-infested darkness, the magnitude of which can shatter souls... An awesome display! — JC Smith

Anima Mundi (Cze) "Another World II" CD 1999 Old Europa Cafe

Fitting somewhere in the 'esoteric' sound category of Old Europa Cafe's output, this release takes that baggage and updates it with sounds of modern studio production. A treated classical sample (commanding violins) introduces the album only to slip into the mystical Middle Eastern atmospheres and sampled vocal mantras of track two. The third piece, 'Conquest of Paradise', again turns the album on its head, as groovy drum and bass beats are found intermixed with sweeping exotic sounds, backing percussion and the odd chant. 'Forgotten Soul' takes a similar path with vocal chants, sweeping strings, harp tune and groovy lounge beats creating a significant comparison to Atomine Elektrine (which is by no means a bad thing anyway!). 'Automation' strangely includes a sampled conversation taken from '2001: A Space Odyssey', referencing exchanges between the computer Hal and one of the astronaut crew (in which Hal turns against him), the conversation placed over a heavily treated sounds and hyper tribal beats. 'New Horizon' is a fantastic fusion of old world tribal beats and sound, mixed with trance inducing electronics, the following tracks 'crusade' reverting to complex fast paced hand percussion and Gregorian type chants. 'Truce' starts very traditional in sound, containing the continuance of the segment of prior vocals, and deep percussion and tense atmosphere, suddenly jumps a few thousand years ahead by bursting headlong into programmed break beats and classical inspired keyboard layers (strangely enough it works without stifling the atmosphere one iota!). Textures and sounds of Middle Eastern flair are explored throughout the remaining tracks both traditional and modernist in sound. Despite the diversity of sounds the album of 17 tracks has been produced to play out as one flowing filmic and atmospheric piece, which is very visual in sound (drug hazed images of a vibrant trading town of bustling noise located on the edge of desert oasis certainly come to mind). Nodding towards the sounds of Atomine Elektrine (more in regard to the first album) and somewhat towards Raison d'être, Anima Mundi have taken these influences on a vibrant and exotic Middle Eastern journey, ultimately infusing this with their own character and sound. Recommended.

Antony & the Johnsons (USA) "Antony and the Johnsons" CD 2000 Durtro (via World Serpent Distribution)

When I reviewed the introductory split single (with Current 93) of this group, I made mention of the melodrama contained within the vocalist's voice, which makes more sense when looking at the pale white androgynous figure of the cover (Antony himself). Being very different to any album I really own (likewise very different to what most would expect from World Serpent), this has still grasped a special place in my collection with its dark emotive cabaret-type songs. Consisting mainly of elements of vocals and piano with complementing violin, cello, flute, clarinet, saxophone, drums, bass may give you some inkling of the types of tracks that would be produced with such instrumentation. Vocals of mid to falsetto range heighten the real vehicle driving these songs and often strike a sorrowful chord. 'The Atrocities' is a number that particularly stands out with a sweeping cinematic feel of piano and violins that remains throughout despite quite heavy progressive drumming and bass sounds in the middle section. Mostly I am at a loss for descriptive words here, and as this is likely to appeal to only a select audience of this magazine, I will leave it up to the individual to determine if this is for you.

Apoptose (Ger) "Nordland" CD 2000 Tesco Organisation

With elements of dark ambience and martial neo-classical, Apoptose infuse inspiration from both into their own sound, subsequently creating a great album in the process. To describe further, there are no tracks that could really be considered neo-classical in their own right, yet it is the use of ritual/martial percussion and solemn classical tune that give this in part a similar aura. Crowd noise, mid-paced pounding martial beats and solemn keyboard layers are found on the opener, 'Uter Bewusstsein', while the sorrowful yet rousing atmospheres of 'Abschied Von Der Sonne' are accentuated by selected outbursts of sharp drum rolls (that become more prominent mid way through to take the main focus). The sampled female choir vocals of 'Nidstang' give a broad comparison to Raison D'être (at his most composed), with the backing music containing shifting bass soaked noise and classically inspired keyboard layers. The classical type movement continues into 'Horizont' with a deep cello being the most discernable element of the melody. Mid-way in, heavy martial drumming pounds into contention creating a much more aggressive aura over the unchanging musical backing. The drawn out concluding track 'Erntewod' is content with slowly forging forward with a repeating tune and fluctuating backing consolidating the pieces focus. The only thing left to mention is the fold out digipack that complements the music perfectly - a great merging of visuals and sound. This release is definitely recommended.

Arcana (Swe) "Isabel" CDS 2000 Cold Meat Industry

Isabel is the barest sliver of music, three short tracks, a teaser for the latest full-length CD, "...The Last Embrace." What it is meant to do is create anticipation, as the three tracks showcase Arcana, circa 2000...which is very much like previous Arcana, but the astute listener can discern stylistic refinement. What Arcana create is beautiful, majestic music full of sweeping tonalities and rich, textural vocals. In refining their work, the sound has grown denser, more concentrated, the focus unwavering. My only criticism would be that, as with most of Arcana's music, the tracks sometimes feel incomplete, as if Arcana have honed each song down to its prime structural impetus. That said, Isabel has succeeded in its purpose, as the barest sliver of music here leaves me anxiously awaiting more. -JC Smith

Arcana (Swe) "...the Last Embrace" CD 2000 Cold Meat Industry

One of the brightest stars of the CMI roster shines even brighter on this, their third release of sweet sorrowful medieval neo-classics of the highest order. In the culmination of the themes explored on all tracks thus far, the style may not have changed drastically, but the sound now soars upwards to spiralling heights, the summit barely visible to mere mortals who remain at the mercy of these emotional hymns. The opening title track lulls the listener into thinking it is less than three minutes in length (with a deceiving 13 seconds of silence) only to burst back into contention more commanding than ever before stretching out to close to six minutes, male and female choirs complementing each other perfectly as always over a backing of rolling tympanis and orchestral sentiments. The slow brooding string sections and church bell chimes, whispered and sung vocals have never sounded better as when presented on 'Diadema', which in part nods to the track which introduced Arcana to the world - namely 'A Song of Mourning' (which caused such a stir as the opening track on the "... and Even Wolves Hid their Teeth" compilation of 1995). 'Love Eternal' formerly from 'The Absolute Supper' DCD compilation set is even more glowing alongside its brethren, shining magnificently with Ida's solo vocals weaving their magic. 'March of Loss' starts very subdued with light notes strung together, prior to sharp rolling percussion commencing the epic passage of french horns and deeper brass instrumentation, hitting the peak with chimes and chanted male vocals. 'The Ascending of a New Dawn' sees the introduction of an acoustic guitar, ritual chimes and an absolutely massive resonating drum sound, again set against the obviously brilliant vocals. The morose piano piece 'Sono La Salva' is slightly more subdued than many of the other tracks, but no less epic in medieval classical feel. Not content to go quietly, the marching hymn of 'Lorica Vite' sees the album to its ultimate conclusion, with Ida and Peter chanting words in a vain attempt to appease the elder gods. It would appear the increased use of real instrumentation such as cello, percussion, the occasional guitar and an additional male backing vocalist has helped bolster the massive sound, yet the immaculate layering of orchestral keyboards has always ensured (and most evidently on this album) that the sound is as close to a real orchestra as you are likely to achieve via synthetic means. With 10 tracks in all, (two off the previous CD single and the track from 'The Absolute Supper' compilation), the disc is a little short at 45 minutes, but is still another amazing CD from this group.

AsiaNova (USA) "Burning the Blue Sky Black" CD 2000 Influx Communications

With no cover (well mine is a promo) and no details on the CD itself, all I can say is that this release consists of great swelling, bloated atmospheres of massive drone proportions slanted toward a tribal aura. In track 1 tribal flutes processed through reverb and delay add to the slow drone backing with a deep mid paced monotone (and monotonous) beat adds a slight urgency to an otherwise slowly-evolving piece. Elements build, direction is focussed, and the results are stunning. When concentrating quite hard on detail one may detect tones of guitar and resonance of female vocals, but these are mostly disguised within the drawn-out drone process. Vocals again used as an instrument (or drone element) usher in track 2, mixing drone, tribal and classical atmospheres superbly. With a tribal hand percussion set against a bed of dark orchestral drones, this transcends any mere drone categorisation. Over the lengthy third piece, deep fog horn drone atmospheres and disembodied voices make for a tense yet ambient listen of Lustmordian quality. Tribalised elements again add the urgency of the drone textures of track 4, firstly starting somewhere off in the distance of the listening plain, slowly accelerating to the fore of the speakers. Here the swirling non verbal vocals ensure that this piece offers an excellent mix of dark ambience and drone sentiments. Having the feel of being more composed than 'droned', the last track reveals the use of slow orchestral atmospheres, quick percussive wood textures and vocalisations that are neither sung nor drawn out - rather, they recite unintelligible sounds. When slowly introduced other orchestral atmospheres add to the knife-edge of relaxed/urgent sound. With significant additional ground covered in the remainder of the piece, sections of more subdued dark ambience appear (which is by no means a disappointment, by the way!), cavernous in its reverberating textures. There is some involvement in this from Ure Thrall (also a member of the Smooth Quality Excrement project) thus reference to the reviews of these other groups in these pages will reveal that there is a definitive high standard at work here (and likewise very worthwhile).

Baal (USA) "Selections for Biblical Studies and Multiple Orgasms" LP 1999 Troniks

With a cover image that I would more expect from the likes of Cradle of Filth, the packaging further aligns itself to the picture of fetish wear clad females on the back cover by it being encased in a black plastic sleeve. With the release being ridiculously limited to 80 copies, if you don't already have this chances are you will have difficulty tracking one down. As for the music side of things, this is a good slab of industrial noise. Abrasive mid ranged static opens proceedings ('Free Dom'), infused with what sounds like porn dialogue/scenarios (which incidentally continue throughout the album). The sound texture sets a mid-ranged grinding pace, acting as a vehicle for the sexual conversations played out, and varies only slightly in intensity before becoming maddeningly chaotic and frantic with obliterated mid to high end static. 'Pretty Pink Swastikas' has a doom-laden atmosphere of low-end industrial sound, drones and intensifying noise, again acting as a basis for the conversations. The third and last track on side A mixes the elements of noise and deep drones quite well, applying a searing edge to the monotonous wavering static at the high end, with deep ominous sounds taking up the low end. Becoming more freeform to the middle of the track, dialogue takes the main focus (referencing domination and submission) as slow synth programming gradually solidifies, along with what sounds like a looped bass tune. This section has a very nice subdued atmosphere, only rendered tense by the included voices (but all the better for it!). Side 2 offers up massive grinding noise with a mid-paced distorted beat that partly reminds me of Brighter Death Now on the 'May All Be Dead' release. The incessant noise and forceful pounding beats makes the opening segment a highlight. The track soon moves off into more brooding noise territory, and maintains an ominous atmosphere over the lengthy format. The last track ('Underneath Hot Wax') starts with weirdly treated repeated vocal samples and a break beat (of all things!), with the only noise sitting within the background. This format is retained for the whole piece, making it an unusual conclusion to the album. From the initial misconceptions when I first viewed the cover, this is a surprisingly solid and impressive release. If you want this, have fun trying to obtain a copy!

Backworld (USA) "The Tide/A Vagrant Thought" 7" Pic Disc 2000 World Serpent Distribution

This is quite a beautiful looking picture disc, though I'm not sure to how many copies this is limited. A complex and emotive acoustic folk ballad is what we have with the track 'The Tide', on side A. Deep cellos reverberate against the acoustic guitar's warmth and understated male vocals. A lone violin is added sporadically to accentuate the mid-ranged classical sounds. . . . quite a sense of celebratory sorrow to be found here. Side B offers a darkly folk acoustic guitar and keyboard/flute piece with spoken male vocals. The sung female vocals add another level of depth to the sound over the repetitive guitar tune and meandering flute. Both are very pleasing songs that are simply too short, leaving me anxious to hear more from the group.

Backworld (USA) "The Orchids" CD EP 2000 World Serpent Distribution

A two track CD-EP is what we have here, originally meant to be only available at the Wave Gotik Treffen 2000 festival (or so the press release goes). The title track is billed as a cover of a Psychic TV number, yet as I have not heard the original I can't provide any sort of real comparison. Anyway, it is a very uplifting celebratory folk oriented track that highlights beautiful cello accompaniment with the intricate acoustic guitar work and multi-layered, clean, and softly accentuated male vocals of Joseph Bundenholzer (incidentally, the song revolves around the spiritual joys of genital piercing). The second track, 'Flowers in Flame', is a re-mix of a track off a previous album, but yet again my review suffers from lack of a comparison. Working more as a soundscape than a song, drawn-out layered female choir vocals and distant chimes shimmer in unison without gaining or losing pace over the four odd minutes. Nice psychedelic colours and patterns adorn the cover of the card slip sleeve.

Bad Sector (Ita) "Dolmen Factory" CD 1999 Membrum Debile Propaganda

Kinetic radiating energy oozes from these darkly composed, ambient yet experimental pieces which incidentally were previously released on tape back in 1997. Sub bass pulses, static induced sounds, brooding keyboard melody treatments, are expertly combined to make for eclectic moving soundscapes. Discordant drones, sustained noise texture of mid-level velocity (avoiding piercing range) makes 'Ivan 1810' a solid piece of dark ambience, minus any ominous synth elements. Flickering reverberations of multi-textural samples (some vocals, keyboard elements, etc.) make the core and direction of 'Carla 1977' an embracing one. 'Alvin 1953' is perhaps the most composed piece on offer here, with a plodding keyboard beat/rhythm, hazy elements and some whispered vocals awash with computer treatment. Alien vocal set amongst orchestral drones and condemning slow beats spawn an urgent atmosphere on 'Nara 1630', with a similar deep orchestral-type melody flowing through to 'Pierre 1902' (although the other main keyboard section gives a vast universal vibe). 'Brigitte 1872' goes even further in the exploration of classical sound mixed in a more sterile cutting-edge sound production (very much a sci-fi computer sound to what is essentially a classical composition). The short piece 'Exit B' which finishes the album is a subdued drone piece of cold astral qualities, which could be said to be characteristic of much of the overall feel. I am really surprised that Bad Sector are not more highly regarded, as everything I have heard from them warrants praise and attention. With what M. Magrini has created here, this is akin to listening to the experimentations of a modern alchemist shaping stunning compositions from sound elements that by themselves have little consequence. Recommended.

Band of Pain (Eng) "Sacred Flesh: soundtrack" CD 2000 Cold Spring Records

As this is a soundtrack to a recent motion picture, I don't know how much this differs from the group's previous works; yet some tracks seem to have been re-badged as new versions of older songs. Slow profound pulsations, moody orchestral layers, and brooding dark intensity mark slow moving soundscapes of (surprise, surprise) cinematic proportions. Tonal elements of mid to deep bass range make for a very dark ambient styled recording that works very well as an album in its own right and not just as a musical counterpart to selected visuals. Bleak organic sonics, and scattered human vocalizations of pain and ecstasy likewise heighten the mood (and themes encompassed in the motion picture) appropriately. 'Strength to Resist' has a bite to its subdued intensity, with the distant backing sounds and vocals being unnervingly

chaotic, while the title track (the disc's opener), is repeated mid-way though, and at an extended length does full justice to its orchestral bleakness. 'Beat out Desire' is certainly the noisiest piece with mid paced dark percussion over a deep sonic bed with choral samples and complimentary sounds of pain and pleasure. Sweeping, almost electronic sounding elements invade the aura of 'Sister Ann' creating a shrill textural piece. The overall slow movement and evolution of the compositions sees one piece meld into the next to create a drawn out whole, whereby the album really gains nothing by being dissected in to selected 'scenes'. Comparisons for the uninitiated would certainly have to be made to selected works of Caul given the overt religious aura to the compositions. Yet while Caul may have been lifting the veil to let more light into his recent works, these tracks of Band of Pain stay deeply entrenched in darkness and shadow. In presentation this is a little different in look to other Cold Spring items, however this is mainly due to the packaging being aimed squarely at the soundtrack-styled cover. Containing images from the movie (covering themes of forbidden sexuality within a convent) there is a certain element of a Cradle-of-Filth-style photo shoot, but without the blatant tackiness. Lastly, it is great to see selected artists slowly and insidiously weaving their way into wider public consciousness by being given the opportunity to work on motion picture soundtracks. The question is: could members of the public comprehend such a fantastically bleak sonic tapestry?

Baradelan (Ger) "The 3rd and the Final" CD 2000 Quatuor Coronati 762

Another relatively unknown group (well, for the moment) hailing from Germany with this self-released item that I was very impressed with from the first listen. Much of the disc is based on drawn out electronic and organic sounding drones, sequenced in a very spacious (and 'space' oriented) guise seemingly illustrating an intrinsic universal order. A comparison could be made to Inade's "Aldebaran" CD with its murky, sinister and alien like atmospheres - this comparison could be pressed even further (or is it a strange coincidence?) since the name 'Baradelan' is an anagram of 'Aldebaran' (note: 'Alderbaran' being the title of Inade's first CD). Some sort of unusual choir sample introduces the CD, and is followed by kinetic and pulsating drones mixed with static nuisances to create the basis of sound. The track also utilises a repeated vocal sample (which references the CD's title) that is positively placed throughout the composition, shifting from speaker to speaker and intertwining perfectly to enhance the overall vibe. At 14 minutes things are slow-going, but this is exactly where the charm lies as the track slowly unfolds and refolds a multitude of layers, creating a shifting mass of (sub)conscious oscillations. Containing less width and depth to the sound, the second track is louder and more sweeping with low, quickly grinding drones and windswept textures that change pace with a commandingly slow keyboard passage taking the foreground in the last quarter of the song. 'Bunsoh' has a slight industrial tinge to it with the use of select factory-type textures that, by being placed well back in the mix, emphasize the depth of production. Juxtaposed against this is a deathly slow drone pulse that is repeated throughout the track, containing a certain physical element in the sound (or in its low penetrating frequency), making it quite uncomfortable to listen to for the total 15 minutes - essentially eliciting a physical response. The alien sounding textures are again abundant on the following piece ('Mortician's Sough'), using much the same techniques as already displayed, yet creating drones and sounds distinguishable from the preceding tracks. Containing a certain accelerating feel in the composition the tension quickly builds to sustain this atmosphere throughout. 'Dinas Bran' is introduced with signal bleeps, a sporadic layering of sounds and speaker-shattering sub-bass textures, and is the most experimental and minimalist piece on offer. The disc is rounded out with a short three minute piece of sampled era vocals and voice textures paying homage to silent movies of the 1920s. I'm not sure how widely available this release is, given it may be only be a promo release but it couldn't hurt to inquire through <schwerttau@cityweb.de>. Lastly as the inscription on the cover states 'Ambient is silence: HEAR IT LOUD!'. Sound advice Indeed (no pun intended!).

Beefcake (Ger) "Coincidentia Oppositorum" CD 2000 Hymen

With cover art very similar to the first CD, I could make some comment between the metamorphosis of the sound of the albums in comparison to the cockroach to moth insignia of the cover art - yet I won't (but then again did I just do it anyway?). Regardless, anyone who heard the first CD will not be disappointed here, likewise anyone who hasn't should not pass this by. In short, Beefcake have a highly distinctive sound of sweeping cinematic melodies and classical inspired backings, infused with obliterated break beats, vocals and text samples. The first album was quite dark yet had playful elements, and while the same tendencies are displayed here, this disc is overall a slower, much more gloomy affair. The breadth of soundscapes can sometimes be mistaken for sparseness, which would actually be quite incorrect as it is the volume of the beats in the mix that tends to subdue the sections where they are not included. The third track works on three levels: that of slow melodies, chaotic break beats (that are messed up beyond simple sequencing) and a full female vocal sample. This doubling and even tripling of sound layers is where the genius of Beefcake lies - part classical musical theory, part cutting-edge studio composition. A true merging of past and present sounds is perfectly illustrated on track 8, with the drum-and-bass beat enhanced by chamber music orchestrations - and the harp and flute melody gives the track that extra special touch. At its most playful, track 9 is based on multi-layered cut up beats and light quirky melodies. Regardless of the sheer variance of tempo of beats and modulation of sound textures, one track still merges seamlessly into the next, yet another trait that makes the album play out as a stunning whole. Beefcake have opted to not title any of the 16 tracks, letting the listener decipher their own meanings. My unqualified translation? Brilliant!

Beefcake (Ger) "in medias res" 12"ep 2000 Hymen

In a continuation of the review above this vinyl is another in the 12" series that acts as a counterpart to the main album. Here we are treated to four unnamed pieces not on the album proper, which just goes to show how productive this group is (remember that main album is over 60 minutes in length). On obvious difference regarding these tracks is that a more beat-oriented focus is solidly infused throughout. Even on the first track the beats are much less scattered and cut-up, which makes for brooding groovy ambience with the same sparse sweeping background of solemn melodies. Track 2 has a flurry of mid-paced beats that are quite forceful in a way that could be described as 'big beat', if one was so inclined. The backing of this track remains a sparse collage of scattered drones with limited if any tune being shown. The cut-up hip-hop inspired beats of track three (Side B) makes for a moody listen when transposed over the trademark cinematic keyboard layers in perfect Beefcake style. Bittersweet beauty is on order for the final of the four tracks with slow beats consisting of kick drum, snare and high hat that assist in focussing the classically inspired keyboard lines. Overall yet another piece of Beefcake brilliance.

Belborn (Ger) "Belborn" CD 2000 World Serpent Distribution

Belborn are a group to add to the growing list of neo-folk acts creating rousing volkish hymns and marching tunes. Being German in origin and consisting of Holger F. and Susanne H., vocals are presented in their native tongue (mostly containing male vocals commandingly spoken/sung in low to mid range - the female vocals when present of higher range or whispers and acting mostly as backing). Despite being clearly composed on a keyboard (except for acoustic guitars and bass when used) the sound does not come across as weak; rather it contains enough layers of organs, grand piano, flutes, classical orchestral elements, marching percussion etc to create a full and rich sound production, so as the slight synthetic edge not detract too greatly. On selected tracks (for instance, 'Undertan' and 'Wegberei'), a weird almost pop vibe is presented due to the programmed mid-tempo drum machine beats which in my opinion is much less successful than the more traditionally focussed tracks that precede it. 'Weint Keine Trane' is a beautiful yet tragic and melancholic acoustic ballad of delicate tunes and strummed riffs, with this feel and aesthetic also present on a later track, 'Lichtreich'. With its meandering piano melody the last listed track, 'Ruckmarsch Nach Vorn', actually reminds me of the sound and feel of a CD by Fata Morgana (an old Morfiis side project), but transcends this comparison with a more soaring musical backing complemented with marching beats and the sounds of an epic battle in progress. As a bonus the track 'All Unser Blut' is repeated with English vocals (translating to 'All Our Blood'), showing this track to be a great blending of a grand piano melody with marching snare, clarinet and organ dirge. The cover is a simply presented digipack containing imagery of runes, runic alphabet and woodcut pictures (one detailing priests being burnt at the stake) that suits the vibe and sound of the CD. A lyrically sheet also accompanies the cover, with lyrics printed in both English and German - odes and laments to times past and ways forgotten. Quite a good album overall.

Black Lung (Aus) "The Great Architect" CD 1999 Kk Records

David Thrussell, who also does time as the logo battering industrial cynicist/realist, Snog, and the projectionist for the inner cinema treats of Soma, continues his patented, spring-loaded percussive experimental techno excursions, on the latest unraveling of sonic disarray from the International Mind Control Corporation, The Great Architect. The slippery, deft execution is in prime cut and splice mode, as David gleefully manipulates an assortment of choppy samples into sonicscapes that adhere to nonsensical rhythmic patterns. Though I detect rhythms throughout that seem more straightforward (I was going to say familiar, maybe normal, but nothing here could be qualified as normal...), this development cannot be looked upon as laziness. As the multi-layered, multi-faceted approach to construction, to assembling the disparate sounds and textures has advanced, David has honed his skills in such as way as needing, at times, a more (ahem) familiar base for the chaotic melange of sounds. The sonic patchwork is vast, including everything from vacuum-packed, squiggly electronics, to deep-fried razors, to flatulent, squished bleats, to internet connecting mutilations, to contorted, between the dial radio transmissions, to eye-blurring ejaculations of noise, to a thousand other snippets... It's a crazy quilt stitched together with dexterity and a subversive sense of humor, as witnessed by the brow furrowing song titles ('Unorthodox Abnormality Broadcast', 'Gizmo Prediction Fallout', 'Surreal Opinion Simulator'), and the covert thread woven throughout the whole presentation. (Did I mention the satirical gibberish channeled by David as one opens the digipak...?). The Great Architect is David hisownself, a true master of kinetic electronics and deceitfully ambiguous psychological motivations that might just be construed as genius. Or the sonic manipulations of the mischievous... —JC Smith

Blackmouth (USA) "Blackmouth" CD 2000 Crowd Control Activities

This album is billed as comparable to what two members Brett Smith and John Bergin have created with another of their collaborative projects, Tertium Non Data, except with the vocal contributions of Jarboe. On this front I don't entirely agree, as the music fuses many musical elements that would never really fit the Tertium Non Data sound, and due to this mixed focus I feel that some tracks work really well while others do not. The intro track is one example, with low, haunting melodies and the emotive, snarled vocals of the enigma which is Jarboe. Track 2, the title track, is a short bridging piece of slow gloomy beats and partly tuneful backing that runs into 'The Black Pulse Grain'. This piece is a good example of the deviation from T.N.D.'s typical sound with its dark trip hop/drum and bass sound and female vocals ranging from sung to spoken, as is 'Risen', a similarly dark yet more up-tempo track of trip hop/electonica. The (yet again) trip hop styled backing of 'The Burn' is in my opinion marred by sections of grating guitars, however here Jarboe has seized the opportunity to experiment with the tone and range her voice. On the other hand, the slow evocative piano and rasping soundscape of 'Inner Alien' highlight the beauty of Jarboe's voice when she chooses to use her vocals in a clean styling, as she does on 'Smother' against a backdrop of sub-orchestral melody, slow bass and a harpsichord tune, of all things. 'Surrender for his heart' is a particularly good track with trip hop beats and short disjointed orchestral breaks, giving Jarboe the opportunity for a narrative piece. 'Seduce and Destroy' is another track that does not seem to work due to the industrial rock guitars, making the track come off like a bloated overindulgent experiment. The remix of 'Risen' (bloodless remix) included late on the album is rendered slightly more friendly to the ears, with thick bass sound, low distant piano lines and other assorted break beats (as is the case with first track reintroduced as the outro, this time with a different break beat musical form). Despite some less-than-fantastic deviations in sound (on selected tracks), this is still quite a strong album overall, and now that I reevaluate my position, it could be compared to T.N.D, but only on the proviso that you expect quite strong elements of vocals, trip hop and electronica.

Brighter Death Now (Swe) "Untitled" 7" 1999 Xn Recordings

The latest 7" from the sonic malignancy, Brighter Death Now, relinquishes no information (kinda sounds like an extension of the May All Be Dead mindset only, quite possibly, more chaotic...). There is nothing to go on but the music...but what more does one need? The A side opens with the wail of a siren from an operating room in the pit of Hell, a pummeling beat tattooing the souls in torment (unwilling patients to a sadistic fate), scalpels wielded with negligible glee: dissection, imminent; anesthesia, questionable (non-existent...). Don't know what the guttural vocals intone as they are garbled, chewing on distortion. The brain is filleted, that damn siren's wail signalling...what? (Another victim for grim experimentation?) Another soul destroyed for the sonic cause? Did I say this was brilliant?! The B side overflows with blood as sticky crimson bubbles from my speakers. We, humble listeners all, embrace the repetitious annihilation, Roger's vocals crawling underneath, belly to the blood soaked floor. Cluttered, confusing-like a storm on the horizon, THE storm, bringing black clouds and a rain that consists of the broken bones of those who believed in something (...someone-GOD?), and now that the millennium is upon them, all belief has been abruptly discarded... Like a trapdoor swinging open and the instant it swings, the thoughts are as follows: a.) Try to catch oneself on the rim and persevere amidst the hailstorm of bones that invalidate all hope or b.) Let yourself drop DOWN, because there is nothing to look up to the heavens for anymore... Comes in a very appealing, simple yet heavy cardboard foldout sleeve. -JC Smith (Reprinted by permission from Side-Line magazine: www.side-line.com)

Brighter Death Now (Swe) "May all be Dead" CD 2000 Cold Meat Industry

The first edition of this as a DLP was no less than an infuriating lottery game due to the random additional tracks and bonus single or double sided 7"s. At least everyone is guaranteed the same tracks with this CD re-release although in 'feel' it really does pale in comparison to the original vinyl version. Housed in a similar yet shrunken fold out poster cover, the CD comes also encased in a colour slip sleeve of the main cover image of a massive pile of skulls being set upon by scavenging crows (minus the text and superimposed necrose symbol). All the main tracks off the LP are here, likewise introduced via a short and remixed version of an untitled tracks off one of the bonus 7", crammed to the capacity of the disc given its overall 74 minute running time. Still, those holding the DLP version may retain additional elements not on this CD in the way of between one and three tracks (depending on which LP/bonus 7" combo they got). The sounds of this release are not really like any particular album that precedes it, rather a mixture of elements packaged in an early punk anarchistic delivery and DIY aesthetic. Taking the repetitive drone elements of 'The Great Death' era and mixing it up with the harsher elements of 'Innerwar', you might get some idea. Given that this contains only 6 listed tracks, the cuts are bone scrapingly deep and long, inflicted from a knowing soul who has mastered the art of delivering and sustaining pain. With an abridged nameless intro remix track of pure cathartic aggression, the chugging/surging tape loop of 'I Hate You' kicks in with considerable force, and also contains tape-processed vocals and sporadic stabs of sound. Repetition is in order and as the track hits its plateau early, it is content to pronounce its hatred for everything - including you as the listener. 'I Wish I was a Little Girl' is a personal favourite BDN track, with its feverish vocals, incessant loops and pure noise aggression. 'Behind Curtains' is atmospheric in tone, with high end wavering sound and a mid-ranged distorted rolling beat. Spoken vocals are again included, but have a more psychotic edge which becomes more noticeably aggressive as more layers of noise are applied. 'Pay Day' enters with yet another vocal snippet before the apocalyptic waltz loop and industrial clatter stomps on everything in sight, while 'Oh What a Night' uses a slower dronier edge and some ear piercing elements, again employing the simple method of increasing vocal and music intensity as it progresses. The final track, 'Fourteen', is quite lengthy, and features a slow pounding beat complementing the electronics fluctuating in the background, with vocals and samples distorted in such a way that they simply become another layer of electronics within the track. For the most part, putting words to BDN's sound is an arduous task; yet since Karmanik has been at this project for well over 10 years now (and with no sign of letting up), this will go down as another classic chapter in the BDN bible.

Carrion (USA)/Crepuscule (USA) "Cryptomnesia" CDR 2000 Louis Productions

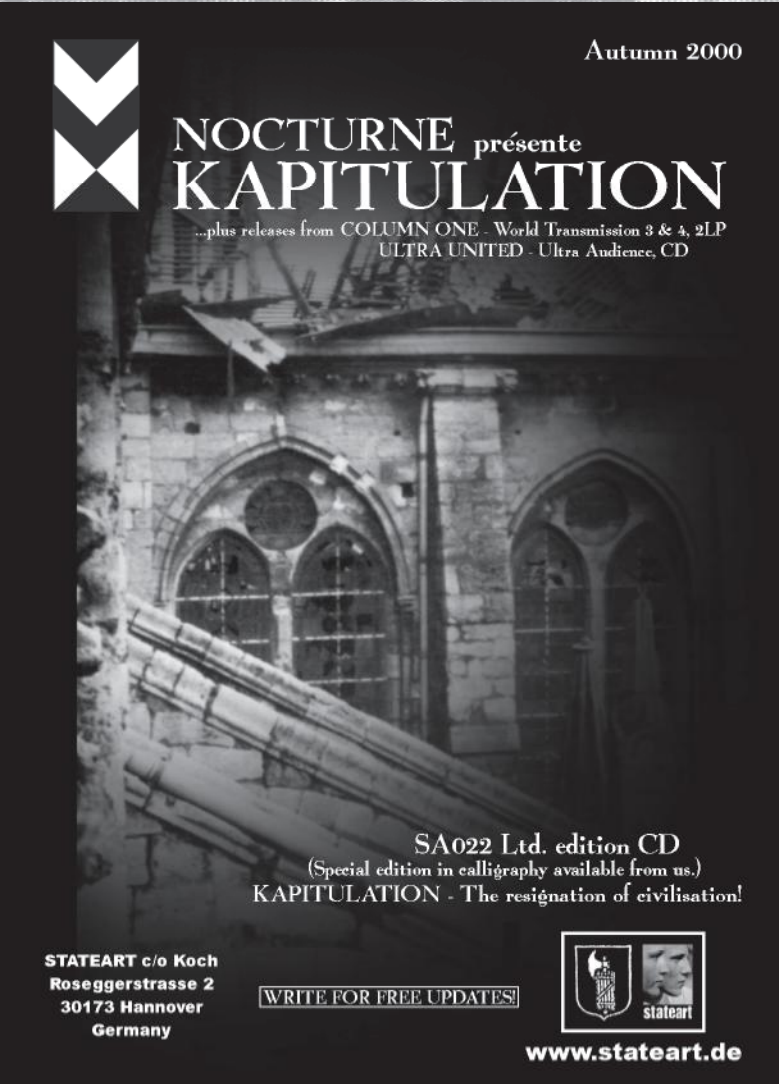
This CDR is basically a non-commercial prerelease of a side project of Crepuscule along with a bonus track from the main project; however there is talk of this being officially released via Slaughter Productions (and who knows, by the time this review is published this may have occurred). While Crepuscule takes a skewed angle on the death industrial genre, Carrion more inhabits the power noise scene associated with Ant-Zen label but likewise takes a (very) left-of-centre approach. The tracks here represent a relentless mix of beats, corrosive sounds, vocal samples etc, oft appearing to be working on two levels - that of the beat/programmed layer and that remaining of the multitude of bolstering sound layers, vocal samples and random keyboard layers used more for effect than tune. Even on the slower tracks the sound collage is just as full and forceful due to the make up of grinding electronic machinery and studio manipulations creating a dark 'beat/noise' type manifesto. However to think that these 'tunes' are straight forward enough to every be 'danceable' would be clearly wrong, as even when sections of groove or rhythm appear to solidify, other random generated elements leap into the mix throwing things completely off. Carrion's focus is more akin to cutting edge-studio trickery with the randomness of the compositions simply being a by product of the main intention. Nonetheless I have taken quite a liking to groups of this ilk of late, including the new Ultra Milkmaids CD and new Squaremeter CD (both reviewed in these pages). Also as I am such a music packaging/presentation junkie (and that this CDR is without cover), I am intrigued to see how this item will get packaged on official release. The bonus Crepuscule number and the closer of the disc is entitled 'a voice from nothing' and was specifically utilised as source material on the title track of Schloss Tegal's latest CD "Black Static Transmissions". More interestingly both this track and Schloss Tegal's version supposedly contain samples of Electronic Voice Phenomenon (EVP, otherwise known as voices of the dead). I will say that this is by far the best Crepuscule track I have heard yet and likewise one of the downright creepiest when played loud late at night (given the implications of the content). Much of the scattered sounds, documentary narration and just plain weird noises and voices are (sporadically) recognisable from the Schloss Tegal version, yet they retain the trademark signs of a Crepuscule piece. Though with minimal (if any) recognisable keyboard tunes, one discerns deep, clinical and otherworldly drones interlinking sections of sampled voices, EVP examples and poltergeist-like clatter - if didn't already mention it, this is certainly a very intriguing (and entrancing) listen. I don't know if this track will be included on the official Carrion release (or later Crepuscule CD, for that matter), but I am damn glad I have a copy of this on this CDR to fully appreciate!

Chthonic Force (USA) "Chthonic Force" CD 2000 Zos Kia Sounds (via World Serpent Distribution)

This one is quite hard to review given the variety of genres it transverses over its short length (just under 40 minutes). The main person behind this is Tim Madison, though guest appearances come from the likes of Monte Cazazza, Boyd Rice and Thomas Thom, among others (mostly as vocalists). Acoustic guitars, swirling textures and low spoken/sung vocals of the opener give the perception of an apocalyptic folk type release; however the noise elements and screeching feedback (in amongst a spoken word piece by Monte Cazazza) on track 2 certainly makes you think twice about pigeonholing this. The neo-classic elements of 'In and Out of Sin' (even though a short piece) again further define the distant boundaries of the amount of ground covered in sound and style. Short pieces of spoken word (the one by Boyd Rice covers a comparison of society to the S&M scene - just without the role-play), noise experiments, droning guitar riffs and doom laden keys really only give a short description of what to expect. The overall vibe of the compositions (regardless of styles) has a very old school sound, and this would seem to be much the product of the calibre of collaborators present. Ranging from calm to grating, harsh noise to industrial might seem to present a jagged whole, but this is still an interesting listen.

Coil (ENG) "Astral Disaster" CD 2000 World Serpent Distribution

Forming some sort of re-mix/re-working of an earlier album, this CD contains also new material not on the 99 copies of the original 12" vinyl. After toying with a short moog generated, scattered sound treatment piece ('The Avatars'), the slow ritual percussion and fleeting synth treatments of 'the Mothership and the Fatherland' commence the real section of the album. Melding hazy electronic treatments the 22 minute piece seeps out the speakers, slowly coving the floor, filling the empty vessel of the room drowning everything in the thick, dreary atmospheres. Subdued angelic voices chant slow wordless prayers, along with the tonal drones and intentional sporadic clutter as if being true relics of forgotten sound. Enticing and utterly engulfing . . . '2nd Sun Syndrome' continues as a simmering liquidous mass of sound, complete with a tar-like consistency throughout the rise and fall of the quirky rhythm. Returning to an epic length format, 'The Sea Priestess' explores more subterranean depths, this time in a more commanding manner with drawn-out male vocal drones/chants. Set alongside various radiating keyboards treatments and chimes are the smooth echoed spoken vocals of John Balance (which reference the CD's title late in the track) resulting in no less than great psychedelic ambience and fable narration. Containing a more solid song structure, with classically-driven elements of cello and violin amongst synths and vocals, 'I Don't Want to be the One' tends to jolt the passive possessed out of their haze, yet still embraces enough to offer comfort, later becoming tensile with increasing lunacy of the vocalist. The



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last on offer ('MU-UR') returns the depths of the second track with its ritual percussion and darkly haunting tonal soundscapes sprawling past the 20 minute mark. This time the spoken vocals are again in narrative form, yet are so heavily treated that they sound almost feminine or childlike as the backing becomes occasionally jarred with eruptions of experimental tones and keyboard tunes. Towards the mid to late segment the experimental elements take over to quite a schizoid effect, devolving to the opening soundscape in the concluding stretch. Finally, the notation of recording location seems to indicate that it had a major influence the atmospheres created here, as the album was allegedly recorded under the water level of the River Thames.

Coil (Eng) "Queens of the Circulating Library" CD 2000 Eskaton (via World Serpent Distribution)

With a CD encased in a clear pink shell with next to no info, (other than listing the title track and collaborators), here we have a one-track 50 minute journey into slow drone territory. Early in the piece Dorothy Lewis (Thighpaulsandra's mother) is the guest vocalist uttering lyrics written by John Balance. Some slight reverb and surreal vocal treatments are utilised blending the words as if some form of electronic cipher. Below the vocals the hazy warm drones slowly fold and overlap in a circular fashion not really having a clear direction rather rising and falling in a sonorous fashion. Over the remainder of the disc not a hell of a lot happens other than slight shifts in the alignment, level and number of the drones, yet still inhabiting much the same sound texture territory throughout. Consequently this is probably my main gripe with the track as it lacks direction and pacing for a piece that spans close to an hour. Anyway, I believe that this item was released both as a mothers day tribute and to celebrate a live performance of the group and while not my favourite Coil piece, no doubt this will mean little to the hardcore collectors of the group.

Coil (Eng) "Music to Play in the Dark, Volume 2" CD 2000 Chalice (via World Serpent Distribution)

A vocal mantra (consisting of the single word 'something') sitting amongst swirling winds and a lone keyboard drone, acts as an unusual opener of the disc (a follow-up to 'Music to Play in the Dark, Volume 1'). Nominating 'Something' as somewhat of an intro, the following track ('Tiny Golden Books') would not be out of place on a computer of space type documentary given the playful programming of the tune. The dark traditional piano playing of 'Ether' catches my ear rather favourably, yet the weird scattered sounds and vocal treatments making this a not entirely straightforward listen. The computer programmed cut-up beats and baroque-sounding tune of 'Paranoid Inlay' offers another weird listen, while the brief middle track ('An Emergency') features Rose McDowall on vocals. Built around a rhythm of static glitches, and Middle Eastern sounds, my favourite track comes in the form of 'Where are You?', which exudes some of the fantastic atmospheres of the "Astral Disaster" CD with both John and Rose handling vocals. The final piece, 'Batwings (A Linnal Hymn)', progresses slowly, beginning with an organ tune and wavering electronic/astral computer noise (again with the spoken vocals of John) before culminating in some quite beautiful vocal harmonies.

Column One (Ber) "Sad Finger" 7"ep 2000 StateArt

This being my first introduction to this quite prolific group I can say that I have been more than pleasantly surprised. Side A offers up the title track, which is in fact a live recording from a 1999 Polish show. Sparse symbol percussion and fluctuating backing noise start things off, with a morose bass/ piano tune and low sung/ spoken vocals later becoming apparent. The gentle depressive aura of this is fantastic, which is sustained with only minimal change throughout (some increased use of tape loops and noise) on what is really a composition of part song & part experimental ambience. Flipping over the nicely weighted vinyl, the two tracks on side B represent studio recordings. The first of the two tracks is 'Silent' and is reminiscent of the feel of side A, mostly due to the slow bass tune & later utilised vocals, piano and symbol percussion. This track sounds somewhat 'artsy' but it is again the depressive mood evoked via the beautiful piano tune and accompanying distant guitar that has me utterly floored. The third track 'with a cry' again achieves the same feel (& ultimate result) of the preceding track, yet is done via a treated guitar tune and a myriad of backing loops, noises, sound treatments and field recordings. The packaging while of the standard slip sleeve variety is printed on textured card (& contains another card insert) with unusual pictures to illustrate the ep's title. I certainly want to seek out more from the group on the strength of this (although I do hear that the sound of the group does change drastically between releases).

Con-Dom (Eng) "Rome Songs" 10" EP 1999 Old Europa Cafe

Here three tracks of Con-Dom vitriol are pressed into blood-red vinyl, one side timed at 45 rpm and the other at 33 rpm just for interest's sake. Without even referencing the musical attack, this is worth getting for the cover alone - a period photo of Pope Pius XII shaking hands with Hitler. This image of religious hypocrisy has obviously fuelled the project into yet another anger filled analysis of the control-domination concept. 'Rome Song' is a typical hotbed of white-hot noise, with mid-ranged static, squealing feedback and the obligatory ranting vocals which in most part is singular in its approach throughout its duration. 'Pro-Judas' is more subdued than usual, and is therefore the most interesting track. More bass-heavy in sound, it contains a mid-paced beat, yet another unconventional element for the group. The vocals are still yelled and slightly echoed, but the beats and sound depth move away from the all-out sonic attack for which this project is best known. 'Papal Bull', the last track on offer, features a slow feedback loop that doubles as a lurching rhythm, again in a manner slightly more subdued than one would expect from Con-Dom. Layers of static do enter the mix, but these only add to the breath of sound rather than taking over completely. A large written passage on the inside cover (detailing the concept of religious ordainment of war) forms the lyrics of this piece that are repeated a number of times over the lengthy format. Here the vocals are not yelled in anger, but are rather spoken as a declaration, and are subjected to a mild and highly emotive sound treatment. The length of this piece allows the track's dynamic to play out slowly, with the noise and static gaining momentum and volume throughout, creating power through more subversive means. For a Con-Dom release this is actually highly listenable and not just an anger venting tool, showing that the group just keeps getting better with age.

Contrastate (Eng) "Todesmelodie" CD 1999 Noise Museum

So the new Contrastate album has finally arrived, which unfortunately also represents their swan song. And when it comes to electro-acoustic soundscapes inter-dispersed with poetic spoken-word segments, none have ever really challenged the distinctive sound of this group. 'Third Rock'n'Roll session' arrives with semi-melodious guitar derived drones and organic sounding clutter, with the layered segments ebbing and flowing in a confined forward motion. Spooky sepulchral voices and a lone ringing telephone precede a fractured echoed beat segment that ushers in the first spoken word section of the album, and contains almost a full structure with beat, tune and voice (I said 'almost'). The ever increasing and pulsating beat/rhythm under a miasma of treated sound samples and voices make for an urgent piece on the unusually titled 'The Sardines have Finished Knitting'. Here as the pace increases the backing becomes likewise sparse yet more emotive with its tense semi-classical aura. When 'Cutting the Cancer' commences with its beautifully dark melody and sung vocals, it appears as if we are to get a real song format out the group; but this notion is quickly dispelled in the flurry of semi-martial drumming and sporadic sound (although we do get a second taste of the vocal/melody mid-way through). And what would you make of the vocal line "you are blamed for avoiding the truth"? Gregorian chants carry the epic 24-minute piece 'The Suitcase or the Coffin' to the altar of the inner ear, offering up a subtle and engulfing soundscape punctured by other snippets of subdued classical tune, choral vocals and vocal mantras. More guitar drones and sparse percussion resurrect the piece, sweeping it off into weightless spatial soundscape territory. Yet this is by no means heaven as the aura takes a sinister twist through the introduction of slow plodding piano notes, hand percussion and writhing drones (the last 7 odd minutes of this piece arrive as a partly disjointed mix of sung/spoken vocal drones/ harmonies and other straight electro-acoustic segments). While I don't think this could be considered the ultimate Contrastate album, it is still leagues ahead of most and a great testimony to their legacy.

CTI (Eng) "Electronic Ambient Remixes" CD 2000 Conspiracy International (via World Serpent Distribution)

This CD is by the infamous Chris Carter, who has extensively remixed and reworked one of his analogue synth albums called 'The Space Between', released way back in 1980. I can say that I really did not have any expectation nor any real idea of what this was supposed to sound like, but after numerous rotations I have been more than pleasantly surprised. While billed as 'dark ambient remixes', there are faint traces of trance-inducing electronica, that in fleeting moments bring to mind Atomine Elektrine's "Archimetical Universe" with its sweeping galactic (occasionally beat-laced) soundscapes. There are never really any real beats per se, but the programming does come in the form of very subtle rhythms, pulses and tunes (as is shown on the fantastic 'Interloop'). Much of the aura is akin to drifting through the endless expanses of space (likewise drifting effortlessly between the ambience of each track), stretching the concept of time and space in its wake. The underlying sound is of course analogue given the main source material, but other than that this presents itself as a very current sounding experimental electronica/dark ambient release.

Current 93 (ENG) "I Have a Special Plan for this World" MCD 2000 Durtro (via World Serpent Distribution)

Given that I don't have an overall grasp of the sounds produced on Current 93's numerous albums over the years, I will avoid acting like I do - rather, I will present a straight up description and let well-versed fans decide how this album measures up to other releases by the group. One track at a touch over twenty minutes seems much longer as it engulfs you in a poetically tinged hypnotic state. Words written by Thomas Ligotti and spoken by David Tibet are both desperate and tragic in content, with delivery conveying a feeling of total emptiness and loneliness. After getting the rambling's of a madman set against a clock ticking out of the way, David's first vocal passage seems as if random thoughts were recorded and played back on a dictaphone. Soon after the shimmering, wavering organic waves flow forth, yet strangely contain a somewhat metallic resonance. Vocals cut back and forth from sections of indecipherable treatments to tragic story-telling, segmented by the intentional nuisance of an on/off switch, all the while with a half-played melody ebbing throughout. Limited additional ground is covered other than the above sound treatment, but this is where the magic is most evident, stretching the essence of the time fabric with the focus held on the narration of the surreal story, full of confusion and ambiguity. The primary-coloured art of the digipack cover is yet another facet of Tibet's talent, and while at face-value it seems to misrepresent the music, it is also entirely appropriate in its surreal depiction.

Current 93 (ENG)/Antony and the Johnsons Orchestra (USA) "Immortal Bird/ Cripple and the Starfish" CDS 2000 Durtro (via World Serpent Distribution)

Two tracks, 11 minutes including a new track off the upcoming Current 93 album and an introduction to this unusually-titled new group (that David Tibet incidentally brought to the attention of World Serpent). Although Current 93 is listed as the first artist, the play order shows otherwise with Antony and the Johnsons Orchestra appearing first. Calling this music melodramatic is somewhat of an understatement, for its tops even Nick Cave in vocal delivery. Being an octave or two higher than Cave's vocals, the accentuation of vocalisations give them a very distinctive sound, set against a backing band of violins, cello, piano, harp and clarinet, later including standard drumming and a saxophone solo. Although this is different to what I would normally listen to, it remains an intriguing track nevertheless. Reasonably straightforward in song construction, Current 93's 'Immortal Bird' is a subdued guitar, organ, xylophone, and sung/spoken vocals piece that has a nice ambient air. Heavy in radiating warmth, the production is akin to dozing before a warm open flame. This is quite removed in sound from the previous MCD, but still has sparked my interest for the upcoming new release. As much as this is an introduction to a new group and new album respectively, its real purpose has been to serve as an appetiser for both.

Current 93 (ENG) "Sleep Has His House" CD 2000 Durtro (via World Serpent Distribution)

The review of the above Current 93 track (which appears on this album) stands as a broad description of this release, yet I find the aura all the more tragic and desolate when a similar sound is played out over 9 tracks. The instrumental opener of a sparse bass tune, lightly strummed guitar and droning organ (liner notes state it is actually

a harmonium) sets this mood precisely. Each song uses mostly this same instrumentation and evoke a similar depressive mood; yet rather than being boring or one dimensional the CD opens up an emotional vortex that you can't help but revel in. The tragic air is evoked less by the content of David Tibet's sung/spoken vocals than in the manner in which they are intoned. This would seem to have a lot to do with the album having been produced in memory of his recently deceased father, with songs and artwork revolving around this theme. Mild electronic minimalist studio treatments are employed on the latter half of 'The Magical Bird in the Magical Woods', but do not detract from the emotive framework being woven. 'Red Hawthorn Tree' sees the odd shrill trumpet blast included in a track that is the closest equivalent to what would constitute a smile for the album (but barely that, in all honesty). It is funny how a track can encourage a whole new perspective when presented in the confines of an album rather than as an unfettered single: the above reviewed 'Immortal Bird' single weaves more magic as part of a collective whole than as a lone crusader. The vocals on 'Niemandswasser', which sound as if they were presented by a man on the verge of total collapse, only adds to the depressive dimensions explored, conjuring up a soul swept away by the swirling winds that mark the track's end. The only drawback I could possibly find is in the 24 minute title track (specifically dedicated to the memory of his father), as the harmonium drones become too repetitive without the assistance of other instrumentation (except for spoken vocals). While the last piece, 'The God of Sleep Has Made His House', does not alter the basic framework of sound, strangely a hint of Pink Floyd can be detected here (and not in a disparaging way either). Between the two Current 93 albums reviewed, two very different facets of their sound are explored. Take your pick, as either are great.

Cyclotimia (Rus) "New Death Order" CD 2000 StateArt

This is somewhat different to what I was expecting, however this has much to do with the previous track I had heard from the group (a track on the "Edge of the Night: Russian Gothic Compilation" where the group presented a new aged/classically influenced trance/techno piece). Overall the sound here is quite a bit darker than this particular track and likewise contains far less trance/beat oriented sections. 'Miserere' (the first track) has extremely tense sub orchestral drones and is yet another of many groups that have used that now infamous sample from the movie "Jacob's Ladder". Half way in the sound changes completely with Gregorian vocal chants that are partly uplifting and partly sorrowful, complimented with underlying synth layers and factory clatter type noise. Such is track two in representing the title track, it is introduced with hard snare drums and rising noise layers with sampled choir vocals adding a sense of morose despair in amongst multiplying (relatively) non musical sound layers. There is a certain sound here comparable to early rasion d'être but here is generally a harsher vibe. Lush (synth) strings & choir vocals commences 'cursed ground', yet things take a turn to harder atmospheric territory with shrill treated synth layers and other assorted noise voice samples. The final two pieces 'Manifest Destiny' (parts I & II) are mid paced synth layered percussive type sound works with smatterings of sampled talking the cover topics relating to the title and cover image (depicting three surly looking high flying business types). An unnamed bonus track is also included and manages to solidify a soundscape that cuts across the modern and arcane via the use of religious chanting and low synth pulses and drones. The overall vibe is fantastic and a great conclusion piece. I somehow think Cyclotimia will become a quickly known name on the strength of this MCD.

Dawn & Dusk Entwined (Fra) "Forever War" CD 2000 World Serpent Distribution

My first introduction to the group was an Anthanor's "Lucifer Rising" compilation, and even though the track was a reasonable effort, for me it acted more as a marker hinting at what was to come from the group in future. And while I may not have heard the first CD (released last year, also on WSD), this second CD is nonetheless quite stunning. Deep, morose, neo-classical is what is on hand here, even with a certain similarity to the distant forlorn sounds encompassed in LJDLP's works – in other words, very damn good. The prominence of a heavily accented European voice is shown on the opener 'Heading towards the west' - the music a combination of deep percussion and slow classical string melodies. While the main piano line on 'To the Fallen Ones (Eternal Two)' is quite simplistic (in its overly drawn-out orchestral sounds), it sustains a particularly evocative aura with distant rumblings becoming more evident in the foreground. Again the piano lines on 'Shades and Shadows' draw heavily on what could be described as a trademark LJDLP element, complete with speech samples and scarred sweeping textures shifting in the background. Segments of trumpet blasts and distorted martial percussion render 'Wyrd' a much less melodic track, resulting in it being mainly a vehicle for crowd noise, vocal samples, far off bomb blasts, etc. The sorrowful choir samples at the start of 'Skies of Belgrade' convey a feeling of unspoken misery, prior to the shrill whistle of an air raid sirens puncturing the subdued backing atmosphere (from here distant echoed percussion, spoken vocals and a slow organ tune enter the composition). 'Enter Ashland' is yet another example of where the group excel by taking what is essentially a simple melody and creating a more than effective aura by embellishing it with organ sounds and heavy pounding percussion. After hearing the calibre of the tracks on this second album, I will have to see what I can do about tracking down their first effort. Recommended.

Death in June (Eng) "Heilige" CD 1999 NEROZ

When referencing my show report of the Death in June performance in last issue, one might consider this would get an instant thumbs up given this live CD release was recorded at the aforementioned show. Sadly this is not the case, mostly due to the fact that the live recording lacks much of the power and punch of actually being there. The overall martial aura in the live sense came through via the pounding drumming, yet on this recording it has been mixed far too low. Likewise the recorded vocals have taken much more of a central focus, with less emphasis on the underlying music. Taping the show straight from the mixing board (I assume) has removed any hint of crowd applause, and further tends to turn the listeners' ear way from appreciating the music as a live rendition, rather sounding like a live studio take. Now that I have aired these grievances, in balance I will add that the sound production is crystalline in clarity and full-bodied in breadth, with no complaints about the actual sound (these have more to do with the mixing). As with the earlier description of the show, the CD showcases much of the newer material in the first half, with the second half reverting to the standard acoustics of the early to middle era of DI6. Aces in the first half certainly are provided with live renditions of some of the tracks off the "Take Care and Control" album, including 'Despair', 'Little Blue Butterfly' and 'Frost Flowers' being definite stand outs, complemented by the use of orchestral and vocal samples. Both 'Bring in the Night' and 'Only Europa Knows' are presented in full percussive guise, with the latter being a very aggressive rendition complete with full vocal snarls. 'Death of the West' marks the changeover to the acoustic format followed in quick succession by 'Heaven Street' and 'Little Black Angel'. 'Kameradschaft' comes across stunningly live, merging the acoustic strains of the guitar perfectly with the more martial percussion of recent DI6 albums. Later acoustic stand outs also come with 'Giddy Giddy Carousel', 'Rose Clouds of Holocaust', 'Hullo Angel', 'Leper Lord' and 'Fall Apart'. After lulling the listener into a somewhat relaxed state due to the acoustic segment, DI6 ups the anger level for the pounding final track 'C'est un Rêve'. Overall this is a good musical document of the last show of DI6 for the 20th Century (which incidentally features 20 tracks in all), but sadly it does not quite capture the sound of actually being there. The talent of the musicians and clarity of recording is still a testimony to this long standing group, and any fan who has followed DI6 for a number of years will no doubt want to obtain this.

Death in June (Eng) "Operation Hummingbird" MCD 2000 NER (via Tesco Organisation)

Playing out as a sister album to the new direction DI6 toyed with on "Take Care and Control", Douglas P (assisted by Albin Julius of Der Blutharsch) returns with 7 tracks, likewise on a new label after departing from the World Serpent ranks. This time around any hint of the traditional DI6 use of acoustic guitars has been removed, instead again playing with martial themes of sampled classical loops, keyboard treatments, vocals and drumming. While the opening cut 'Gorilla Tactics' (sic) contains savvy dry humour, it is also a venomous attack on Switzerland for banning DI6 from playing there during the 1998/1999 tour (pointing out the utmost hypocrisy of the country's banking regime), completing with the chiming of cuckoo-clocks to drive the message home. Here Douglas cuts a straight path through all emotional arguments against the group by squarely turning the mirror back against its accusers. 'Flieger' is one track that just has to be heard to be believed, sounding like a swinging 60s number (but with obvious DI6 slant) with an uptempo beat, driving bass and meandering keyboard accompaniments. By all accounts this should not work, but somehow manages to be one of the most surprising and engaging tracks of the CD. Other tracks continue with the verse/chorus/verse format of the preceding acoustic phase of DI6 compositions, but here employ a totally different framework of orchestral/classical driven sound ranging from shrill to brooding string sections, commanding horn movements, marching beats, etc., depending on which track is being played out. All are done superbly, and create both calm and rousing-inspired atmospheres. Also with track titles such as 'Hand Grenades and Olympic Flames' and 'Let the Wind Catch a Rainbow on Fire', you are assured poetic yet ambiguous lyrics throughout. With Douglas P having recorded music as DI6 for nearly 2 decades, there still seems to be no sign of slowing down, and instead he sounds refreshed and revitalised with the new direction on this MCD (and the last CD), ready to continue unrepentant for years to come. Even if you have not been acquainted with DI6 before, this would be a great place to start given the new-found direction and vitality.

Death in June (Eng) "Discriminate" 2CD 2000 NER (via: Tesco Organisation)

Being a re-released item, this double CD set has written in gold embossed writing on the back cover stating "a compilation of personal choice", which quickly sums up this release. All in all 33 tracks are included spanning songs from DI6's albums released through the years 1989 to 1987. Not having seen the original version I don't know if the packaging has changed, but with this the two CD's are housed in slip sleeves further housed inside a larger card outer cover (similar to that of the 'Operation Hummingbird' cover), additionally with a standard cover insert. Simplistic but aesthetically well presented. I guess there is little point in specifically reviewing the music as so many of the tracks have become classics within the DI6 camp and thus require no further comment. This is a great release to capture a broad overview of what DI6 have been and have subsequently become over the years, and even for an avid fan it is akin to having a large portion of the back catalogue on multi-disc rotation.

Der Blutharsch (Aut) "The pleasures received in pain" CD 1999 WKN (via World Serpent Distribution)

This is the second full length CD of Der Blutharsch and, incidentally, the last via World Serpent now that WKN are to be distributed by Tesco Organisation. The packaging consists of a reasonably simplistic brown card slip cover depicting a knight on horseback in the midst of battle and a picture of Albin on the inside. The slow ritual neo-classics of chiming bells, massively deep horns and slow strings of the first (of thirteen) untitled tracks sets the underlying mood of the CD, while the second and third pieces set the overall martial marching tone that is slightly tinged with volkish sentiments. Massive orchestrations and mid paced pounding beats are immaculately presented, both tracks showing the more frequent use of main vocals in a commanding sung/spoken guise. Some people have stated they are not enthralled by the increased use of vocals, yet I feel they complement the atmosphere of the shorter tracks of this album. The darker ritual/industrial undercurrent momentarily surfaces on the slow soundscape of the sixth track, with the muffled sound actually adding to the mysterious atmospheres, in amongst which spoken vocals, sampled choirs and deep horns reverberate. Track 7 is simply amazing in the urgent strains of the beats and tunes, resplendent with rousing chanted vocals, as is the warlike strains of the up-tempo track 8 with its mantra of "patria et libertas". Track 9 has sampled quotes pertaining to a conversation between Boyd Rice with his Son, while musically it sees the introduction of an acoustic guitar into the Der Blutharsch sound creating a slow folk/ritual feel. The shrill cry of distant bagpipes and anthemic martial drumming give way to one of the most powerful tracks on the album (track 12) that only multiplies in stature over its five minute span. This tune is segmented somewhere between ritual and deep brass orchestral, complete with commanding dual vocals throughout (chanting 'we never give up' towards the end). The lengthy final track has a subdued trench warfare sound (and conjures up a visual picture consisting of barren fields in the dead of night with the unnerving quiet between combat). Some of the backing noise sounds appear to have been sampled from a couple of tracks off Brighter Death Now's 'Innerwar' album, with distant air raid sirens, slow horns and sampled text vocals making up the remainder of sound. Whereby the first album played out as a single vision (from subdued to commanding orchestral atmospheres), this album comes across more like a collection of songs under the guise of a compilation album. This brings also a comparison to the feel of selected albums of 'TMLHBAC' (Albin's previous project) with the emphasis on individual songs collected in a single album. While the debut full length might have overall been a cinematic vision, this album is a refocused view of

subdued, rousing and celebratory marching tunes. If you are yet to discover the power of Der Blutharsch musical works, do not wait any longer.

Der Blutharsch(Aut)/Ain Soph (Ita) "Roter Berg/Baltikum" 7"EP 1999 WKN (via World Serpent Distribution)

The packing on this one is not much to get excited about - a simple brown and yellow slip sleeve with next to no information (other than it appears both tracks were recorded live at different performances). Far off orchestral strains and subdued pulse foundation get things off the mark for Der Blutharsch, being quite ritualistic in feel compared to the much more folkish neo-classical strains associated with Albin's compositions. After a few minutes of the introduction have elapsed, the martial implications burst forth with mid to high range quick percussive beats, shrill orchestral strains and commanding sung/spoken vocals undercut with higher range (sampled?) choir-like vocals (all done to a high standard). With this lasting for another few minutes, this passage abruptly finishes to the sound of rapturous applause, followed by a very eccentric and hokey 'western' piano dirge. This has me scratching my head somewhat, but it really only serves to end the segment... The Ain Soph selection is much harder to get excited about, even to the point that I would call this track openly embarrassing. This sounds like a very bad jam session of a couple of drugged up and washed out muso's... complete with keyboard riffs, strummed guitars, up tempo rock beats and bland vocals. My distaste for this track goes as far as I feel it even taints the quality of the Der Blutharsch segment. While Ain Soph has gone through various stages of musical evolution, I still can't believe this is the same group that produced the totally encompassing dark ambient (concluding) track on the fantastic "Lucifer Rising" compilation. I would say that this EP is worth having for the Der Blutharsch track alone, but it also depends how much you can get it for since WKN releases are generally pretty pricey and highly collectable.

Der Blutharsch (Aut) "The Track of the Hunted" CD 2000 WKN (via Tesco Organisation)

The ever productive Albin Julius has quickly returned with his third full length declaration under the Der Blutharsch banner. As with the last album, this too is built around a format of shorter songs, and while the neo-classical sound has certainly not been removed, there is less focus on martial and marching themes, with slightly more exploration of the ritual and industrial sides of Der Blutharsch. This is not to say that there has been a change in direction, rather an exploration of a different facet of this project's sounds. Here 10 untitled tracks are presented with the opener containing sampled choir vocals and air raid sirens, creating a mix of beautiful and alarming sounds. Slow strings, more sampled female choir vocals, and a slow undercurrent of industrial sounds embodies track 2, being a good example of the mix of neo-classical and ritual industrial. Track 4 (as with a couple of tracks off the last album) uses again the acoustic guitar within the sound, creating a folk oriented feel within the chanted vocals, slow tunes, drones, etc. Track 5 contains probably the best use of martial percussion that I have heard from Der Blutharsch thus far. The brilliance of the multi layered percussion is in its anthemic proportions that have additionally avoided being simply a marching beat. This rousing number is one of the highlights of this disc with a perfect blend of echoed spoken vocals, deep horns and xylophone tones. Track 7, a piece of mid-paced ritual beats, weird accordion tune and overt darkly-muffled atmosphere (also including a Charles Manson sample) is another example of the slight diversion of this album, while track 8 is of the dark neo-classical martial percussion style - another highlight of the album. Sampled voices, spoken vocals, incessant percussive beats and brass horns and mournful bag pipe tunes intensify until its conclusion. An up-tempo era recording in the form of German accordion song is sampled in its entirety without any modification as track 9 (Ah yes, Albin certainly enjoys these heritage recordings!) before the move towards the closing passage is made. The last track is much more cinematic in its orchestral sound, more along the lines of the first CD than the remainder of this album (or the last album for that matter). There is a free from flow evident here with the massive orchestral sound, which does not seem to have emphasized throughout the shorter compositions. Within this track is a hidden eleventh piece, again seeing the exploration of martial and ritual sounds creating a dark soundscape devoid of any tune (apart from the occasional tune held in the sampled chanted vocals). The embossed digipack is particularly stunning, consisting of brown card with images of statues and classical art printed in silver. Overall this is another successful and victorious battle won by Der Blutharsch (but it seems that Albin already knew this, considering that the very first sound of the album was the pouring of a celebratory glass of wine).

Dissecting Table (Jap) "Power out of Control" CD 2000 Triumvirate

Working under the Dissecting Table moniker, Ichiro Tsuji has constantly forged ahead with the exploration of over-the-top power industrial rhythms and noise structures. "Power out of Control," an album recorded in 1998, has just now been released in 2000. A muffled bass intoned section starts the album ('Uncontrollable'), but only lasts for a minute or so until the trademark elements of squealing feedback noise, rigid programmed beats, grinding bass runs and over-the-top electronic growls appear. The palpitations of both beats and bass give a sense of urgency, yet the track does calm down into a sub bass and beat segment at the six minute mark with an almost neo-classical feel to the slow keyboard tune recreating the sound of deep horns (not that this lasts for all that long before heading back to cerebral damage territory). More trademark bass/rhythm structures are found on 'Bottom' as an introduction to the machine gun pulse, noise and obliterated vocals. Later things calm down again (not in relation to speed but noise attack). It is here, when the high-end squeals are shelved, that I find D.T most engaging, as it gives the opportunity to appreciate the complexities of bass and programming being presented. This track also contains a great section of semi-structured deep sub noise and slow dark pounding industrial beats, morphing into what could essentially be drum and bass (but with a sound only Ichiro could create). Reasonably composed beats and bass in a mid paced dark groove oriented style embodies 'Naturalism', along with vocals gargled in an almost death metal guise. With no overt noise attacks on this track, I would have to designate it as my favourite here. With a track appropriately entitled 'Go Beyond the Limit', it is not hard to envisage the noise/grind machinery being kicked back into full swing, yet still retaining a complexity of approach between segments of the composition - the use of composed/ noise, loud/ soft format is the key here. With only 4 tracks this still has a play time of over 40 minutes, I guess this would be a good place to start as an introduction to D.T, as much as it will appeal to those already taken in by the insane style of the group.

Sally Doherty (Eng) "Empire of Death" CD 2000 Tiger Records (via World Serpent Distribution)

This beautifully powerful release certainly has the winds of time permeating every aspect of it, sweeping the listener back to an epoch of human civilisation long past. The music on this release was originally composed for a BBC documentary of the same title, focussing on the discovery of the pyramids of a Black African Empire discovered in Sudan during the 1930s. As a quite interesting musical illustration of this subject matter, I found it a little odd that the cover is adorned with images of Egyptian stone artifacts rather than imagery relating to the actual topic of the documentary. Anyway, turning to the actual music, comparisons could be made to selected moments of Dead Can Dance (particularly where Lisa Gerrard presents solo chanted vocals) or even Sephiroth. A classical structure of flute, cello, violin, clarinet and oboe intertwined with female vocals used predominantly as an instrument itself, is the basis of the sound of these reasonably short compositions (16 in all and a little short of 40 minutes). Even though programming and keyboards are also noted in the instrumentation listing, there are no elements that hint at a synthetic sound production, which greatly assists in the timelessness of the music (the synth and programming seem mostly related to the dark percussive sections). An Arabic flavour is likewise fused into much of the song writing, and despite the length of the tracks being around 2-3 minutes, they do contain an impeccable flow, appearing rather as segments of one drawn out composition. While typically movie or documentary soundtracks can have some parallels with the dark ambient genre, in most cases they fall well short in one regard or another. However here the evocation of a subdued mysterious air throughout this music (in my humble opinion!) allows this release to transcend any barriers of simply being deemed a soundtrack piece, containing the ability to work extremely well as a dark ambient work.

Dreams in Exile (USA) "Since Long Before CD 2000 Crowd Control Activities

Like the Amoeba release also reviewed in these pages, Dreams in Exile follow a similar path. Gentle guitar works of both acoustic and electric format encompass a hazy mood, the male vocals likewise being gentle and mournful in delivery. Interestingly the majority of tracks have been embellished and enhanced by drone artist Vidna Obmana, and these deep swirling drone atmospherics add a distinctive breadth of sound. Elements of rock, folk and tinges of subdued gothic influence are all evident, but the CD never really totally subscribes to any of these genres. Some instrumental tracks are barely noticed as such given the low vibe that the vocals create when they are present. Despite have traditional elements of guitars, drums and vocals, all are processed in such a warm resonating manner that it is quite easy to become engulfed in the music much as one would while listening to drone ambient works. This is sort of a release that transcends genre boundaries in its distinctive artistic pursuit.

Droneament (Ger) "Wassermond" 7" EP 2000 Drone Records

Calm textures and digital drones give way to a slow evolving atmosphere based loosely around a water sample (the liquidous feel is evident yet remains in the background). Without being forceful, side A offers up a multidimensional piece of layered sounds, (some hazy some mildly rhythmic) all the while the bubbling and gurgling water textures create an amazing drone piece. Side B ('Wassertank') starts more slowly yet has an inherent forcefulness not evident on the first track. The main textures are more urgent, consisting of a multiple drones, sound pulsations and full bodied water samples. Less actual sound distance is covered, but this is made up in the departments of sound depth and dynamic. The cover consists of green card, with silk screen printed image to match the clear green vinyl. Another superb release from Drone Records.

Dual (Eng) "Klanik/4 t H" 7" EP 1999 Drone Records

When guitar layers are presented as treated drones I could not be happier, with Dual making me quite ecstatic! "Klanik" contains sounds of both low and mid ranged frequency sitting alongside a slow percussive beats, creating atmospheres that surge off on multiple tangents. The texture and volume remove this from a simple derivative drones, likewise when infused with sparse melodious sounds creates an engaging slow morphing song. '4 t H' embodies a sparser experimental guise with solid crumbling and fractured textures, deep feedback, sporadic clatter etc, all underpinned by elements of drawn out guitar drones. The level of volume and intensity of feedback again ensures that the track transcends any simplistic drone categorization. There could be a broad comparison to Contrastate indicating the sheer brilliance of this. Definitely worthwhile.

Einleitungszeit (Slo) "Schrei des Feuers" Video 1999 Ars Morta Universum

As far as videos go for this type of scene this is not a bad offering at all. While there will always be limitations to how a live video turns out, the feel and look of this falls somewhere between the slightly inferior quality of the Tesco Organisation's Heavy Electronics festival video and the quite superb Der Blutharsch live video. As for the live set up, the group consists of two individuals - one on the floor working various distortion pedals, pieces of metal, pipes and steel spring (that all appear to have been contact mic'ed), while the other (standing) individual handles the noise/beat samplers and live vocals. The sound is extremely heavy and chaotic with searing noise blasts and flanged vocal shrieks creating an all out aural offensive. Situated somewhere between power electronics and death industrial, the intensity peaks early on and remains so throughout its 30 or so minutes. With a mix of synthesised samples and mostly non-rhythmic beats, the bone-grinding machinery aura is further embellished with tortured vocals (of nondescript ramblings or outright screaming) and the shifting textures of random metallic noise. Certainly these sounds give the aura of some of the most tortured sounds to come from Brighter Death Now (i.e., the "Necrose Evangelicum" CD). At one point the guy working the homemade noise implements, sets upon the mic'ed metal sheet with an angle grinder (creating quite a calamity, as you would expect) then alternating between that and an un mic'ed metal plate strapped to his chest (more for visual effect and symbolism than noise generation, I suspect...). The footage is derived from a single camera (mainly of a hand-held style), moving in and out of close ups, with the visuals being fed through some post production colour and texture that adds to the chaos. And while there may be the odd audible applause at the end of each track, there is no footage to indicate the size of the venue nor how many people may have been in attendance. Admittedly having only previously known

this group by namesake, I don't know if the live tracks are taken from previous releases, however on the quality of these live noise scapes I now plan on tracking down their other musical outputs.

Elijah's Mantle (Eng) "Legacy of Corruption" CD 2000 De Nova Da Capo (via World Serpent Distribution)

Elijah's Mantle's a group I have heard quite a bit about, but whose sound was unknown to me until this album. Knowing that the man behind the project, Mark St John Ellis, is both an artistic and poetic fellow, this release is actually quite along the lines of what I was anticipating. Toying with rigid romantic (if not baroque) neo-classical framework, spoken vocals are unique if nothing else in presentation - each word meticulously pronounced to give an air of pomp and ceremony. The neo-classics of the pieces use the expected sounds of horns, strings, deep percussion and likewise harps, flutes, clarinets, organs, pianos etc which results in a framework that is less militaristic than most others in the genre. One other instrumentation element is the electric bass used within a number of the tracks, which to my ears does not sit all that well, given that it isn't the most expected instrument to hear alongside an orchestral sound. Another point that on initial listens has been slightly off-putting, are the spoken vocals. It is not that they are at all bad in and of themselves, rather I think the 'less is more' principle would work here. Particularly when Mark St John Ellis was guest vocals on the Protagonist's debut, the vocals melded perfectly when only presented in a short segment. Maybe the extent of such vocals has been somewhat dictated by the theme of the album being poems of Charles Baudelaire being set to music (I assume this is the individual on the cover?) and the need to include sufficient text. Anyway, not wanted to dwell on negatives, the musical backing is very solid in authentic classical composition, (if not aesthetically sparse in instrumentation) which clearly brings to mind Shinjuku Thief's "The Scribbler" CD, which incidentally also took inspiration from an literary source (some Kafka texts). Highlights are found on the lengthy tracks such as 'The Spirit and the Flesh' and 'Abel and Cain', which bring out the full flair of the project in a sweeping yet subdued orchestral manner. The packaging is a stunning 24-page booklet of selected poems by Charles Baudelaire printed in black and silver on a stark white card stock.

Ex.Order (Ger) "Silence + Brutality" MCD 1999 Associated Distortion

Three tracks of subtly insidious psychological degradation, a collaborative effort forged by Inade side-project Ex. Order and the image work of Charles Acethorpe. Echoed vocal samples lead one into the slow throb brainwash environment of 'A Dazzling Peace,' calm, deceptively sinister tones rising and sinking in the background, burrowing into the cranium: it has begun. 'Bound By Threads' continues the heavy samples vein, this time disrupted by distant machinegun fire and a swirling, menacing ambience upon which pulsing distortion is slathered over the top. Escape is futile: outside, the war rages on; in here, in the Ex. Order sonic vacuum, a more depraved fate awaits. 'Flesh Pumping' is a furious pummel and squeal affair, no need any more for prisoners or the attainment of covert information, just kill them, kill them all... And, before death, the looped female vocal sample conjures an image of an underlying sexual deviation that fills the mind with perversity, a perversity born of the hideous circumstances: the cruel, less apparent vestiges of war... As with the brilliant The Infernal Age CD from early 1999, Silence + Brutality is another devastating journey into the blasted cranial mind-field that is Ex. Order's sonic dominion. -JC Smith (Reprinted by permission from Side-Line magazine: www.side-line.com) -JC Smith

Fire+Ice (Eng) "Birdking" CD 2000 Tesco Organisation

A bit of an all star cast is featured on the new album by Ian Reed (aka Fire+Ice), with musical contribution from members of Death in June, Ostara, Blood Axis, and Backworld, to name but a few. As for the music, this is traditional poetic apocalyptic folk music, and the vocals of Ian are full of tragedy and nostalgia. While not stepping outside of the boundaries of the genre, this stays true to its folk origins, even to being even more folk oriented than any other of the affiliated artists. A piano tune follows and embellishes the main melody line of the title track and likewise crops up in varying degrees on other tracks (as do keyboards, percussion, etc.). The particularly traditional folk structure of 'Drighten's Hall' is fantastic with its lone acoustic guitar and whistle - the vocals of Ian are more forced in delivery, sitting against a backing of female vocals. Things really hit their peak on this track with the use of soaring violins, bringing visions of elder times into full view of the mind's eye. 'The Lady of the Vanir' does not feature Ian, but seems to be a piece written and sung by Alice Karlsdottir, with acoustic guitar, keyboards and percussion providing the musical backing. The track sounding most akin to D16 acoustic works comes with 'Take my Hand', which incidentally features none other than Douglas P himself playing both acoustic guitar and keyboards. The organ sound and vocal delivery of 'My Brother' strangely sounds like a gospel hymn, and I don't feel that it fits all that well with the other acoustic tracks. Regardless, the final track has a mood of more uplifting celebration when compared to the others insofar as it is full and rich in sound, the musical accompaniment here consisting of acoustic guitar, piano, keyboards, violin, etc., which is a good conclusion to this set of traditional folk sounding tunes.

First Law (Ger) "Violent::Sedated" CD 1999 Loki Foundation

First Law brews a strange concoction of uncommon, enigmatic ambience (and what strange concoction is suggested by all of the pharmaceutically inspired song titles?). Violent::Sedated circles from the periphery, from a place not often explored (just to the left of limbo), blending tonally oblique elements into a sonic cauldron that continually boils over with contextually bizarre sounds. Brittle, fluttering wings introduce 'Amphetamine Sulfate (100 mg),' after which futuristic, smooth edged synth textures are unveiled—think Wendy Carlos' work on Clockwork Orange. A sudden interruption of odd, anxious tapping leads one into a realm of metallic, tribal percussion upon which the synths are re-introduced, giving the ambience a different focus. Wary slivers of razor honed nuances peek through the folds of 'Loxapine (220 mg),' while uncomfortable synths desperately try to arrange themselves, to no avail: the mood is tenaciously discomfiting throughout. 'Paroxetine HCl (50 mg)' seems recorded low to the ground as twitching, insect level sounds overwhelm; the ambience is moist and uneasy, a nauseous landscape as heard/sensed/translated via insect antennae. The caught in the propeller blade gyrating ambience of 'Phenobarbital (175 mg)' is jolted by bursts of ritualistically laced percussive disruptions and a noisy crowd demonstration. Gurgling, oscillating synths and feedback struggle for control amidst a whirlpool of chipped plastic, percolating rubber, and splintered metal during 'Phenelzine (70 mg)'. As threaded together with light tribal structures, the noise itself is never out of control (despite the aspirations of each individual sound). Repeated listens familiarize the listener to the First Law sonic mandate and really bring out the hidden textures buried within. Unique—not exactly dark soundscape, but different...—JC Smith

Fennesz (Aut) "Plus Forty Seven Degrees 56'37" Minus Sixteen Degrees 51' 08"" CD 1999 Touch

It is reported that Christian Fennesz, armed with a powerbook laptop and guitar, recorded this album outdoors and unrehearsed, which if is the case sits perfectly with the beautiful landscape shots of the booklet and oversized card cover. One shot in particular details power lines crossing an open field, factories dotted off in the distance. This image of the merging spheres of the electronic and the organic sums up much of the feel of this album. With no sounds that could be recognized as being derived from a guitar, the album is a sweeping explorations of textural sound intensity and cutting edge sound aesthetics. Hints of melody weave throughout the sound exploration, yet really remain incidental to the overall atmosphere. Tracks three and four contain a sound texture akin to that of a low flamed fire, yet produced via an electronic medium of glitched sporadic sounds and gaps of silence. Track five is an intensely noisy and dynamic piece of multi-layered static, but is presented in with an underlying melodious drone that it has a soothing quality. The fragile shimmering textures, submissive static and distant sounds of track six create a massive depth of sound revealing to the mind's eye a panoramic vista of storm clouds closing in over a rolling landscape. The final two pieces are reasonably short, but cover sounds ranging from the aggressively loud to the softly contemplative (even when each are just over two minutes in length). For those not really familiar with the MEGO label (on which Fennesz first appeared) and affiliated artists this could be compared to the sound textural direction that Hazard has been pursuing over recent albums. The only other thing I could add is that this is brilliant underground experimental work of digital abstraction - the product of a scene that will be a major force in the future of experimental music.

4th Sign of the Apocalypse (USA) "Lost Hour World" CD 1998 Suffering Clown

While not musically similar to Dream into Dust, the sounds created by this project do have one similarity in that they defy an easy description. There are dark soundscapes punctured with weirdness (somewhat humorous choices of sound bites), slow experimental guitar driven tracks with morose male vocals (such as on 'Miss Meh'), and other pieces of selected sonic oddities. Even when the dark ambience is more straightforward looped styling, they are furnished with track titles such as 'On a Slightly Higher Moonbeam Than Death', again taking a somewhat tongue-in-cheek approach. On the other hand, 'Bleeding' contains an industrialised rhythm with repetitive driven guitar riff and vocal chant, while field recordings, sirens and an assortment of other found sounds act as the backing collage. An acoustic guitar intro to 'KnickKnack' ushers in the weirdest track of the CD, sort of a drug-infused experimental jazz piece with experimental industrial overtones (this track is a little too far out there for me to fully appreciate). The plodding beats and surrealist atmospheres of 'Take me Away' seems to present musical insight into a madman's mind, with the rambling, heavily treated vocals ultimately solidifying this vision, while 'The last 7:38 of Your Life' is an appropriately engulfing listen with guttural bass tones, deeply echoed cyclic sounds and disembodied voices calling from the abyss (ultimately being one of the best tracks of the CD). Great ideas are explored here, yet sometimes it is hit-and-miss in final musical presentation.

Genocide Organ (Ger) "The Truth will Make you Free" LP 1999 Tesco Organisation

Arguably the most controversial power electronics group ever, Genocide Organ returns with this new release. Now before the politically correct factions get all riled up with the visuals, text and samples contained on this LP I think the following quote from a G.O interview is relevant: "We never say what we think, and we never believe what we say, and if we tell the truth by accident, we hide it under so many lies that it is difficult to find out" (Descent Volume 5: The Death Issue, June 1999). Now with that out of the way, even if the music was not up to standard (not that this is the case at all) this release is worth it for the packaging alone. There is a certain special feeling you get when holding the ultra thick, heavy weight, maximum thickness, gloss card gatefold album cover, that is essentially beyond description. This simply needs to be seen to understand what I'm getting at.... Orchestral sample intro and ambiguous 'fatherland' styled speech text introduces 'Tide Side' (side B is 'Grow Side') merging into the subdued electric throbbing, sweeping textures and absolutely amazing vocal treatment/ of 'Harmony'. It is this track which both introduces and likewise solidifies the overall vibe of the LP (being heavily controlled rather than an all out blistering attack). Essentially this album opts for domination through subversion when compared to G.O's previous use of sheer sonic violence. Smattering of vocals and voice snippets are inter spread throughout the factory stompings, sinister drones and general clatter giving a quite old school feel to the sound production creating some supreme industrial noise/ power electronics. Each of the 10 tracks establish a different sound early on, then explore minor variations with the sound treatments, loops, vocals, voice samples ect throughout. A nice touch to the LP is a locked groove finishing each side to ensure the tracks will never finish either with looped vitriolic laughter or factory clatter depending on the side. If the LP and packaging were not enough, a bonus CD is included: a re-release of the 36 minute 'Leichenlinie' LP. Taken from a much earlier period of G.O's power electronics career the sound is more of an all out aural assault just to boil the blood a little in the wake on the subdued chaos of the LP (including the classic cut 'Klaus Barbie'). Lastly I'm not sure why there is a point in reviewing a release such as this (as already the 1750 copies are long sold out) other than to spite those who were too slow in ordering this and to egg on the ensuing bidding wars that will occur as unscrupulous record collectors start auctioning off their multiple copies. Expect to have to sell a kidney if you find one of these for sale....

This Gentle Flow (Aus) "This Cage" MCD 1999 Left as in Sinister

Here we have a solo group of one Valerius Calocerinos, also the founder and operator of the label on which this is released. Distant rain and thunder, slow fuzzed out guitar and grandiose keys waiver before kicking full swing into the quick paced gothic rock of the title track. The bridging elements and a certain style of song-writing draw some comparison to some the more experimental black metal bands (particularly Arcturus), however it is the drum machine and mid-ranged vocals that position this

squarely within the gothic realm (although thankfully not being derivative of this scene). Strange clangings, wails, programmed beat elements and choir generated keys give a certain gothic ritual element, prior to a huge monster industrial riff making its appearance - but heaven forbid that things are straight forward from here! Vocals have a weird treatment, keyboard layers become more prominent and generally tunes, vocals, riffs, noises etc tangent off to do there own thing generally under the banner of the track ('punctured vein') but somehow remaining relevant to the overall direction. The prominent programmed bass and beats of 'Laugh' probably work the least favourably in my eyes, but even as the most structured piece I feel is the most experimental in melding elements into a whole. 'Confused (just still)' is something of a gothic Mr Bungle number, with background sampled carnival music and simply weird and quirky compositional writing of mid paced darkly gothic tunes, heaped with plenty of down vibed keys and up tempo beats. I found this quite an intriguing listen given these are not musical territories I often frequent, particularly due to the surreal elements evoked through the more experimental tune writing.

Golden Dawn (USA) "L.V.X" CD 1996 Suffering Clown

This CD contains the actual rituals used by the Order of the Golden Dawn partially set to music (likewise the 20-page booklet cover includes the full written instructions of the said rituals). To start the disc off, 'The Temple' is independent of the later ritual side of things, and sets out to describe the history and dynamics of the Golden Dawn organization via a plodding gothic rock type musical foundation. The auras evoked on the seven ritual movements are obviously heavily ritualised due to the chimes, vocal chants and reading of written passages, but it the inclusion of keyboard layers, guitars, bass and programmed beats that removes it from being simply a ritual recording. The stylistic sound of the music, with its intricate guitar work, classical synth lines and slow rigid beat programming, adheres to a gothic rock framework, but does so in an understated way that prevents it from becoming pretentious (as this style can often be). The fifth track, 'Spirit (Part 2)', is quite unusual in its use of a funky bass line and straightforward rock chorus which in my opinion jars unfavourably against the atmospheres generated up to that point, but luckily the CD does redeem itself on the beautifully sorrowful next track 'The Ritual of the Rose Cross'. Musically speaking this is good, and made all the more interesting due to the magical and ritual implications.

Gridlock (USA) "5.25" CD 1999 Pendragon

There are no rules, no clear-cut guidelines, when it comes to Gridlock. Not one to cater to the specific ideals or dynamics of industrial (the genre/label usually associated with them), the duo of Cadoo and Mike Wells have always pushed away from the expected constrictions, into a place uniquely their own. 5.25 collects rare, live and remixed tracks from the ever-mutating electronicans, materiel that spans their whole creative existence as Gridlock. The music Gridlock creates is distinguished by pristine, hope-ravaged synthwork and snarling, stuttering ratchet, machinery infused percussive interjections. Tracks like 'Halo,' and the live version of 'Burn,' utilize an incendiary feedback whine as a creative tool, assisting with metal pipe clanking percussion that spits bolts in rapid fire succession, while Cadoo's gritty, screaming whisper vocals seem reminiscent of one who regularly gargles steel wool. But the already sparse vocals have been pushed even further by the wayside on more recent endeavors. The title track is a spastic percussive excursion, kinetic to the nth, that defies the laws of gravity as it scampers over extraterrestrial terrain, accentuated by looming bass structures that rise above the frozen craters. Just excellent! 'Edit 364' crisply illuminates remote cosmic frontiers, offset by some corrosive percussion that rips and snorts in restrained junctures, as if speaking an as yet undefined language. 'Program 41' emits squiggly, lubricated electronics that slither upon the surface of another sonically visualized extraterrestrial topography. This strange, beautiful music highlights the exquisite transformation in progress. It's a long stretch from the earliest incarnations, including the electro-fied corruption of Berlin's 'Metro,' included here for kicks. A very worthy release that showcases Gridlock's evolution from electro-industrial into dark soundscape into...(?)...via music that continually moves beyond...—JC Smith

Gruntsplatter (USA) "The Death Fires" CD 2000 Crowd Control Activities

Watching this group's evolution from the early split CD releases has been an intriguing and rewarding endeavor when considering the quality of this debut full length CD. Promise was definitely shown on the early split CD's, further enhanced with the 7" of last year, now amalgamating all experience in a coercive whole, to create an album that I knew they would always produce. While some of the earlier recordings were slightly marred by elements of lo-fi and muffled production, the digitized medium of this release has brought everything to the fore, and was mastered impeccably by one Thomas Dimuzio. While the tones of many of the noise layers are reasonably harsh and scathing, the production has purposefully blunted the razor edge to create a deceptively ambient air - otherwise described as 'noise ambient'. Seething furnace fumes permeate 'Black Toothed Morality' along with a sparse keyboard tune, introducing a new and very positive element into the Gruntsplatter sound. Probing high pitched squeals introduce 'Access the Blood' and waver in view throughout while crunchy sub-base textures grind away at the flesh of your inner ear. The bone-grinding machinery is certainly cranked into full swing for 'Against the Dying of the Light', mixing the chaotic with a system of repetition. Crispy static loops and speaker imploding bass work particularly well in storming unison on 'Fearbitter' as elements are added and subtracted from the mix at various points. As spacious and drawn out 'Struggling to Breathe' is, it still contains a feeling of finite audile space, gradually closing in and engulfing the room in heavy ashen air. With the forcefulness of many of the preceding tracks, the minimalist construction of 'Below the Stones' provides an opportunity for a more detailed exploration of textural subtlety (including mournful drawn-out chants), ensuring this is one of my favourite pieces on the disc. Comparisons could be made to the greats of the death industrial genre such as Brighter Death Now (such as the drawn out moments on the Great Death series); yet while BDN has a very European sound, I feel that Gruntsplatter has a very American flavour, matching up with the sounds being explored in different formats by a variety of US groups. In this increasingly recognized US scene Gruntsplatter have created a niche in exploring sounds that generate fiery and suffocating mental imagery. Finally the cover art matches the atmosphere perfectly, in that text and images are melded into a dark background, akin to being covered in black soot and ash.

Hazard (Swe) " Field/Bridge - Wood" LP/CD set 2000 Ash International (R.I.P)

Benny Neilsen from the inception of his Hazard project has forged ahead with creating increasingly more subdued and experimental soundscapes, becoming more minimal with the previous album and likewise this release. However, the arctic cold feeling of 'North' is not so evident here, where one is instead exposed to an enveloping yet sterile digital warmth. For those not familiar, the title could conjure up visions of someone simply taking field recording and presenting them as music, but this is rather taking an organic aura and bringing it to life through electronic means (whether or not the sounds once originated as field recordings). Interestingly the liner notes state that the final material was recorded outdoors in a Swedish forest (on a lap top I'm assuming) yet many sound samples have a certain 'urbanism' to them (the creaking of an old elevator on 'Location South' is a good example). 'Fibre Test', the first track on the CD, uses the repetition of high-pitched digital blips to gain somewhat of a rhythm, whilst the lower sound range rumbles with bass loaded intensity, and scraping processed textures that likewise enter and exist sporadically. These elements of 'found' sounds, subtle tones, shifting textures, electronic digital cut ups categorise the tracks, placing variations of these in random and programmed patterns over a base of what are often drawn-out bass tones or idling machine-like drones (that occasionally hint at melody). Clutter and chaos versus order and composition: this release manages to work on both of these levels. 'Chords and Branches' is beyond amazing, containing a feeling of rising dread (a horrific archaic atmosphere in the heart of a track of cutting-edge electronic experimentation). The oceanic sonic waves of 'Pylons' are presented via mid-ranged wavering drones, hearkening back to the hazy atmospheres of the debut Hazard CD 'Lech', while the last CD track 'The Log Fire' is just that, a recording of the sonic intensity of fire, with rhythms of malfunctioning machinery thrown in for good effect. The two tracks on the LP take advantage of the longer format, presented two drawn out pieces - one each side. 'Field' takes the guise of the CD tracks slow subtle shifts of digital sound, that is gradually enveloped by drone elements (here they are more high-pitched than bass driven). Mid to late in the track the atmosphere morphs somewhat into far off storming rumbles mixed with sinister sounding scraping textures, the last section morphing again to warm electronic drones, rounded out with a locked groove. 'Bridge' a track of rising static, drones, and sonically crisp elements, is quite a forceful piece by virtue of the quick rotations of the vortex of sound, which at the same time makes for a more composed piece. The format/s in which this has been released is a nice touch, in that around 70 minutes of music are presented, yet halved between CD and LP, acting as a complete set and not just as one item with a bonus CD or LP. I guess this also breaks up the sound that each format flows to its conclusion quite quickly. With simple slip sleeve for both CD and LP, the images are becoming a trademark of Touch and Ash International (R.I.P) releases, detailing forest and wood imagery taken by Jon Wozencroft. This is another fantastic example of digital/organic abstraction that combines cutting-edge studio experimentation with enough old school industrial sentiments to keep me very happy.

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Heid (Swe) "Arktogaa" CD 2000 Malignant Records

I had been waiting quite some time to hear this group as I unfortunately missed out on getting a copy of their limited debut CD. From the positive words been spoken about the group, this, their second CD has not disappointed one iota. In amongst all the archaic atmospheres of slow shifting symphonic layers, distant chanted vocals etc, sits more abrasive sonics and programmed ritual percussive textures of a more modern sounding origin. The inherent skill in Heid's work is that these are blended perfectly together, neither element ever feeling out of place. Likewise it seems that the sounds coming from CMI in the early 90's have been given a full working over with a heavy dose of evolution and originality. Seven untitled tracks of varying length are showcased, resulting in an overall play time of just under 45 minutes. Track 2 is a wonderfully deep piece of classically tinged dark ambience - low bass tones emphasizing depth, with the other sparse layers of vocals, drones and keys creating the slow evolving vibe that is concluded with a slow sorrowful piano tune. A foggy haze permeates all aspects of track 3, (yet this could be said of much of the CD's atmosphere) being reliant on noise and scattered sound as it basis rather than any minimalist tune. Mid paced yet sparse martial beats and an unusually treated vocal sample introduce track 5, the backing tune gradually gaining momentum. The beats sinking into oblivion further allows the slow tunes to take over mid way through. As a conclusion piece track seven contains elements of distant chiming bells, deep bass laden atmospheres and minimalist classical movement to great effect (some middle eastern samples are also infused into the background). Despite having provided some descriptions of individual track, each piece is placed into its inherent whole, creating a fluid movement throughout the complete album with one piece flowing perfectly onto the next, essentially creating one piece of music. The cover is another element that deserves a mention, with the inlay being three sepia toned transparent inserts, the jewel case further provided with a black card slipsleeve. This is a stunning introduction to the group and will now have me feverishly searching out their debut.

Herbst9 (Ger) "From a Dark Chasm Below" CD 2000 Loki Foundation

Herbst9 create complex, textural ambience, consisting of layer upon layer of kinetic, luminous tones and ephemeral nuances of time, sounding not unlike label-mates Inade, though with a completely different agenda. Born in the destitute fringes and moist jungles of Asia, Herbst9 sail the tenacious undercurrent of past indiscretions and potential future travesties (waiting, patiently waiting...), homing in on the timbres of the forgotten, erased from memory, horrors of humanity. 'Ab Ovo' sets the rickety stage, upon which a radiant ambience glowers, augmented with the brushed with solitude intonations of monks, and slivers of coarse memory. The ambience throughout seems leery of human allegiance, though the inhuman impressions are still built on a purely human foundation (a Pandora's Box of sonic possibilities) as layers are melded into, folded over, and unraveled within, other layers. 'The Snake Of Saigon' is an anxious excursion littered with war-like nuances, a miasma of surrounding sonic elements in subtle communion—mournful monks, a plucked instrument that sounds like a banjo but is most certainly some similar Asian instrument—dark rumblings that slither and, eventually, a helicopter that circles in the distance. The remnants of devious, inhuman deeds that could only have been constructed by the human monster itself, linger throughout. 'Melting Spheres' scatters unknown winged monstrosities (a limbic regression to the time of pterodactyls?) before a pensive drone and the rising pulse of anxiety dominate. A demonstrative yell opens 'In The Vein Of Purusa,' a yell that inspires dread and pause for concern as the rain drenched ambience is sliced by a knife that caresses bone strings, trace animals (the jungle looms ever near), and a predatory machinery loop. Odd classical underpinnings add another layer to the strange design, the track, as with all of the tracks on this amazing CD, subtly metamorphic in construction, inherently restless. Herbst9 construct sonic rituals gleaned from the ruins of minds scraped hollow and left to decay, minds privy to evil deeds and the existence of such evil deeds made concrete. On the brilliant LOKI label, reason enough to check this out. -JC Smith (Reprinted by permission from Side-Line magazine: www.side-line.com)

Howden/ Wakeford (Eng) "Three Nine" CD 2000 Tursa (Via World Serpent Distribution)

Having been introduced to this collaborative project on the compilation "On the Brink of Infinity", I was quite looking forward to this. Standing by my summation of their track on the compilation (I reviewed their track by stating the composition was somewhere between an actual song and piece of ambience) this album plays out in a similar fashion. Ambient folk noir perhaps? Segmented acoustic guitars, plucked bass, flowing female vocalizations, sparse programmed textures, piano and violin segments, sampled and treated vocals etc make up the myriad of elements. Yet even in most part containing relative sparseness, selected segments of tracks burst into quite composed urgency, certainly resulted in obvious contradictions. Likewise from the way the overall flow of the album pans out, one would guess that the majority of elements were recorded separately and painstakingly collated into the finished pieces in the studio. Referencing the background of the work the bio states that this album is dedicated to the third and ninth runes with musical time signatures and patterns being derived from the sum of associated equations. Even then with the main nine tracks, we are treated to the prior mentioned compilation track, which is in fact derived from the fragments of nine main compositions (with the then additional bonus instrumental version clocking in at - you guessed it 9 minutes!). Regardless of these calculated nuisances of music composition the end result is an impressive debut album of dark nostalgic feel from two renowned artists.

H.P.P. (Ita) "Horse Penis Pants" CD 2000 Possessive Blindfold

H.P.P. (Horse Penis Pants-now there's a name for you!) is Maurizio Landini, who also does time with (the brilliant!) I Burn. Where I Burn specialize in incinerator ambience sonicscapes, H.P.P. creates looped rhythmic discharges through percussive means, as well as clipped noise and static overload. 'Re-Education' entwines piercing needles into the eardrum while hiccupping belches of condensed distortion and pummeling percussion joist for dominance. 'Scarweld' solders bubbling, white hot noise onto a stuttering rhythmic loop; as the track progresses, abrupt squeals are melted into the mix. 'Private Play' gets positively electronic, a fusion of incessant beats with quirky electronic impulses, sounds that skitter and tumble with a purpose; the track is constructed in shifting segments, vaguely reminding me of the excellent Shock Front CD from Converter, circa 1999. 'Labia Engine' spastically grinds, with punishing consistency, before the racing corpuscles fill the genitalia to an aching arousal, ending with slowly teasing, pre-orgasmic sludge pacing that never reaches orgasm. Furiously beat-plattered and slathered in noise! -JC Smith

I-Burn (Ita) "Third Degree Burns Ambience" 1999, Old Europa Café

I-Burn's second album is a collection of ten tracks in the style and sound that was hinted at on the previous "Ipertermia 10". Likewise with the tracks playing out over longer segments than those on the debut, the pieces having become more fluid, enabling them to traverse additional territory within their timeframes, thus making for a much evolved and improved sound. Deep subterranean textures, vast glacial soundscapes, metallic clatter, static induced bursts of noise are just some of the sound elements that are collated, mixed and infused into these mind-altering offerings. Brooding yet harsh, sinister yet atmospheric - the tracks play out in various such configurations, creating an aura of desolation and isolation due to the sheer barrenness of any organic sounds. To my mind's eye, the atmospheres generated on these tracks represent less the flesh-burning qualities of searing heat than the infliction of pain via severe low glacial temperatures (or even that of dried ice). What is a little frostbite when you get to hear a CD such as this?! Recommended

Ickytrip (USA) "Ickytrip" CD 1999 Ickytrip

Without beating around the point, it is a bit hard for me to review this objectively since straight-off-the-keyboard programming sound simply leaves me cold. This is just too synthesized, particularly in relation to the drum beats and sequences. By all accounts there is no question that the individual behind this can compose and write music, it is just the means by which it has been recorded that I cannot seem to overcome. In justification the synthetic sounds alone are not really the problem, rather the rigidity of the up-tempo factory preset drum machine beats and the lack of any grittier background sounds. While most dark ambient/ neo classical/ industrial artists have no other option but to use keyboards and programming it is often what background elements and layering techniques that are utilised that makes all the difference in smoothing out the sharpness of synthetic textures and likewise assists in achieving a personalized sound. The complaint about factory preset sounds again comes into contention. The bio references this as 'classical composition with modern technology to create orchestral music that resembles a cinematic soundtrack', which I guess is OK to a point; yet, on the other hand, simply add some guitars and a morose vocalist and you really have mid-paced gothic fare. Again my dislike for gothic music or gothically-derived sounds surfaces, but maybe in its favour gothic fans would go nuts over this as a darkwave type release. Sorry, this just does not float my boat.

Ildfrost (Nor) "You'll Never Sparkle in Hell" CD 2000 Fluttering Dragon Records

My, my, look at what the passage of time has offered up for us on the new Ildfrost release! Gone are sweeping and depressive neo-classical hymns of "Natanael", with Ildfrost now veering towards intelligent tribal/neo-classical tinged electronica. Sound like an unusual mix? Well, it's not at all when you listen to this. Modernity has played quite a large role in the updated and 'current' sounding production, but after getting over the initial change in sound the Ildfrost structure is still quite evident. A good example is the dark throbbing classical hymn that is 'Shitspinner', taking on a new studio sound aesthetic by mixing it up with sampled tribal vocals that have in turn influenced the underlying tribal beat. Referencing a more standard electronica sound, 'Novadrops' approaches a sound not unlike what Atomine Elektrine produce with a chilled out new age type beat oriented atmosphere. Dark echoed richness signifies the sound of the tribal percussion of 'Exhalation', with sepulchral voices summoning the unknown (and ultimately succeeding) as the atmosphere becomes increasingly tense with an air of shrill orchestral dread. Sitting over what sounds like a raging firestorm, the introspective piano/xylophone tune of 'Auxiliaries' rises steadily to be the main element (with radio voices cutting in and out occasionally), capturing some of the best auras of the "Natanael" album via quite a different sound direction. On the other hand, 'Fetish of the Hour' is a fantastic track of a dark orchestral/choral aura driven constantly onward by a framework of mid-paced pulsating electronica. Sweeping cinematic precision is showcased on 'Past is no Choral Moon', containing what could easily be described as progressive classical (if that is even a term) where 'Effeve Vocabulary of Summer' is another stunning example of a heavy, darkly brooding slab of beat-laden electronica, and acting as the last album track prior to the short outro 'Done'. While years may pass and musical directions and interests may change, Ildfrost shows they are all the stronger for it.

Imminent (Bel)/ Synapscape (Ger) "Screenwalking" CDEP 2000 Ant-Zen

Not having any knowledge of Synapscape's previous works I guess I can only review this from the Imminent perspective, likewise with the 'Starvation' tag having been dropped from 'Imminent', there might have been the perception that an aim was being made to a more commercial and accessible sound. In reality any notion of this is quickly dispensed with the powerhouse beat-n-noise-fest served up. Whip lashing beat structures explode in crystalline static bursts, leaving barely any room for the trademark moody background layers. And as intense listen as the 'Nord' CD was this effort makes it seem like an album of candy floss coated pop tunes. The flurry of electronic beats are relentless, surging and attacking from multitudes of angles, the remaining soundscape encompassing barbs of flesh scraping static and noise. The tracks are akin to a machine careening out of control being overloaded with pure sonic power, which actually in part would make this music difficult to groove to given the rigidity of it. The track 'Warc' differs slightly by not containing any beat structure but with a tonal soundscape backing and fractured electronic blips and bursts of frequency. The following piece 'Uatio' moves closer to the noise and groove sounds of the 'Nord' CD, with 'Aigre' the final piece being an elongated slab of techno beats and static. As the promo for this CD went "Imminent Starvation is dead...long live Imminent". Well while your there singing praise of them please bring on the next full length so when can hear just what Imminent have become in an individual setting!!

Inade (Ger) "Burning Flesh" CD 2000 Loki Foundation

While I wait extremely impatiently for a new full length Inade album, I could not have been happier to hear that their debut cassette was being re-released with bonus tracks. With the original cassette long out of print this was a great opportunity for me to get acquainted with the formative compositions of the group. Of the 8 tracks originally on the 'Burning Flesh' tape, these come into shorter song formats with less flow overall, concentrating on the death industrial/death ambient vibe of each piece. Remembering reading an earlier review of the 'Burning Flesh' tracks, a comparison was made to the likes of Archon Satani, which I never quite saw in their later releases but can now see why that comparison was made. Windy mid to high end drone textures, sampled crowd cheering and manipulated/echoed church bells encompass 'Overture Bells', while with its dredging drones, distant factory clatter, chant-like sound layers and slow moving dynamics, 'Shattered Bones' brings to mind the classic Swedish sound of death ambience which permeated many groups in the early 90s. 'The Coming of the Black Legions' is the first storming track of intensely ominous slow beats, and fractures electronic layers to create rhythmic and anthemic piece. Other standouts come with the title track in the form of the abrasive yet subdued drone clatter, including some indecipherable vocal samples. The last track of the 'Burning Flesh' set comes with the gargantuan cyclic and spacious drones of 'Through the Gates of Death', a perfect track to complement the visuals of massive stone statues printed on the disc. Moving on to the bonus tracks, there is a marked change in style and sound from the earlier tracks to the later. While great at creating good solid death industrial sounds on earlier material (such as the aforementioned 'Burning Flesh' tracks and on 'The Flood of White Light' 10'), in my mind Inade really hit that special 'something' when they started to focus on mystic, occultist, ritualized sounds. Even within this guise of such inspiration the group has still managed to create diversity of material such as fantastic spacious drone works ('Aldebaran' CD), to more sinister sub orchestral sounds ('v.i.t.r.i.o.l' 7"). This clear change in sound and direction is partially evident at the conclusion of the 'Burning Flesh' tracks (composed in 1993) to the 'Genius Loci' tracks (composed throughout 1994-1998). Even the bonus inclusion of 'Tat Twam Asi' (formerly of "The Book of Shadowz" compilation LP) shows this brilliant massive occultism aura that Inade have since gone on to master. 'Genius Loci Pt. 1' intermixes clanging church bells, subterranean bass textures and the odd vocal chant that rises to prominence late in the piece. 'Pt. 2' with ritual wind instruments and slow tribal beat shows exactly where Inade broke away from emulating a sound to creating something all their own. Distant vocals add to the tense atmospheres, less machine and factory sounding, rather encapsulating an aura of a time long forgotten. Delayed, slowed and manipulated, the once Gregorian chants on 'Pt. 3' still hold their inherent religious flavour, while the backing of slow tribal beats provides some focus and direction. Whilst still slow, 'Pt. 4' ups the dynamics in an urgent styling of ritualistic chants and odd percussion, likewise with increased dimensions of sound layers. Limited to a mere 500 copies, this is a brilliant documentation of the progression of one of the most important groups of recent years.

Inade (Ger) "Quartered Void" 7" EP 2000 Membrum Debile Propaganda

Slowly rising out of the glacial void, slow drones and scattered pulses mark the introduction of this two-track picture disc. 'Crackling Void' is assisted in its namesake via the vinyl format - slow drawn-out shimmering movements being the stylistic approach. 'Quartered Conclusion' is more singular in direction, that brings to mind their 10" EP 'The Flood of White Light'. The cyclic rotation of sound makes it more active and forceful than the first, the assaulting and fluctuating sonics increasing tension immensely. Given these tracks are a few years old (yet only recently released) I would place the sound of this in the evolutionary period where Inade were moving from death industrial sounds and towards the more expansive and spacious territory explored on the 'Aldebaran' CD. In regard to the picture disc format and with the images being of a manipulated eye, could this be potentially referencing the void of the mind's eye? Regardless, all I can say in passing is that too much Inade is never enough!

In Death's Throes (USA) "Infernal Deities Transcending" CD 2000 Live Bait Recording Foundation

Hellish, looped vocal belches climb the limestone walls of the Abyss during the opening sonic aberration, 'War,' riding on the back of metallic scorpions as the din scrambles toward the surface. Dark priests evoke demonic uprisings, meshing (and mashing) the Black Occult aspirations into the ground bone and blood soaked machinery of singed ambience that is In Death's Throes. It seems all Hell is about to be unleashed. This leads into the unnatural cadences of 'Civil Disobedience,' dragging the listener not into sunlight, but an aborted annex just below the surface...an annex of Hell decorated with esoteric tones, the cries and whispers of sounds in torment, and hallucinogenic madness. This is the stuff of nightmares, of those whose eyes have been sutured shut, and there is no light, no awakening revelation bent on releasing them from the grim clutches of such suffocating, condemning darkness. In Death's Throes are Brian Sutter (God's Pets and Jinnseraph) and Stephen Petrus (Murderous Vision, Umbra, head of the Live Bait Recording Foundation label, plus more?). They create multi-layered sheets of sound guaranteed to mess with one's perception of reality by concretizing the existence of Hell, of a pitch-black netherworld that teems with a rabid urgency, with a frothing desire, to infiltrate the confines of your nice, normal world. Dull, yawningly weary loops are the foundation of 'In Celebration II (The Port),' sprinkled with more vocals culled from the blackest regions of creation, subtly espousing sinister sonic intentions. The epic 'Where God Is...' is triggered by a depraved chorus which douses the listener in a swirling cesspool of despondent tones and scratchy cadences. The sensation while listening to this track is palpable, flowing from my speakers, enveloping me in dread. Further in, the track descends into an even more subcutaneous realm, full of volatile, cranium-eroding winds streaming from a crumbling, cavernous (hungry) maw. The sound manipulation and inhuman vocal processing throughout inspires discomfort in the listener, the unnerving ambience at times reminiscent of the work of the great Schloss Tegal (the ultimate compliment!). Evil! —JC Smith

IRM (Swe) "The Red Album" LP 1999 Cold Meat Industry

IRM is a flag bearer of the next generation of sound coming from the CMI camp, with their debut LP being unleashed in a pressing of 700 copies. This full length has arisen after their introduction to the world with their two tracks on the "Esthetics of Cruelty" compilation (incidentally both 'Powerdrill' and 'Martyr 2000' are featured here among the 7 tracks). Classy, pulverising and cleansing power electronics is what we have here, very much rooted in the tradition set down by the likes of Anezephalia, Genocide Organ, Con-Dom, etc. With constant pounding machinery, flesh-searing electronics and a bludgeoning, slightly flanged vocal attack, I would say that IRM are not really forging into new territory, but when generated with such fantastic conviction and clarity of sound production, there are no complaints from this quarter. Regarding my personal tastes, the more unstructured and improvised a power electronic track, the less engaging I find it overall. However IRM have found a perfect balance between chaotic aggression and clear structure and direction, as is displayed on the brooding yet concrete slab solid track 'Unconscious'. Likewise 'Soulcleaner' (the last track on side A), is an absolutely stunning piece with massive and bludgeoning machine gun rhythms, hefty flanged vocal attack and general extremities of mid ranged electronics. The later track 'Katharsis' opts for a part droning, mostly storming framework of sweeping static and cascading waves of searing distortion, creating a cleansing (instrumental) baptism of sound. A similarly slow sweeping structure follows on into the final track 'R.S'; yet here the returning vocals are a fantastic counterpart due the sheer anger and desperation of delivery, enhanced via echo and flanged effects. As alluded in the title of the album I would have to say that this is the plainest cover that Karmanik has ever designed; yet it is still classily presented in all its simplicity. Although somewhat on the short side this is certainly an album that should be in every power electronic enthusiasts' collection.

Iron Justice (Swe) "Tell Me" 7" EP 1999 Cold Meat Industry

Iron Justice, another representative of the new guard of Swedish power electronics groups, present this limited 7" in an 8-page booklet sleeve, embellished with imagery of questionable intent and phrases such as "This is our truth... now tell us yours! The existing edifice is rotten. We need some new foundations..." (just to ensure that things are politically obscure). Despite the pulverizing, grinding textures vocal sample smatterings and general noise mayhem of 'Tell Me', this track is actually reasonably subdued. The pace is mid to slow, managing to be at once harsh and atmospheric simultaneously (yet the intensity does increase toward the end of the piece). When the vocals are introduced, they are heavily flanged and echoed, adding that nice urgent flavour. 'Sons and Daughter's' of side B has a more high end obliterated noise attack, particularly the vocals moving from the rantings of the previous piece to all out psychotic yelling. Screamed wails of distortion and feed back give no respite, creating a track of feverous sonic punishment. This is good power electronics that by no means reaches outside of the boundaries set down by the pioneers (Con-Dom, the Grey Wolves, Genocide Organ, etc.) but that will please most fans of this genre.

Iron Justice (Swe) "Manufacture Of Consent" LP 2000 Cold Meat Industry

Iron Justice specializes in politically infused power electronics whose white noise regime is the very definition of 'harsh' in all its contaminated glory. Opening with the title track, vocal samples bow before the gurgling, slobbering and spitting, squeal infested noise that annihilates the proceedings. Echoed vocals rage underneath, but it's the torrential onslaught above that mangles the audio receptors. Just brutal...and it's only beginning. An impatient arm of feedback is injected with a rusty needle of free-based rage during the clattering cacophony of 'The Worlds Sole Hygiene.' Writhing, wriggling worms of wet processed noise pour from the viscous sonic upheaval that is 'Conspiracy Intl.' A voice flails underneath, amidst static samples and the insurmountable sonic discord. The relentless assault continues on side two with 'Mutual Terrorism,' an undiluted exercise in whip slashing audio terror as sheets of corrosive noise are beaten, lashed and electrocuted while the ever-present vocals bark from underneath the ragged din. 'Mother To Us All' juggles a variety of sharp implements (knives, scalpels) before said implements are utilized to puncture and corrupt in conjunction with a throbbing machinery loop. 'Towards The Sun' dissects the squirming body of strapped down but still alive white noise amidst a deluge of feedback and more frenzied vocal utterances. Manufacture Of Consent is a merciless, streamlined corruption of sound that is mind-numbingly (you guessed it) harsh. Comes on lovely, thick white vinyl and includes an assortment of postcards. —JC Smith

Kelm (Ger) "Blue Mesk" CD 2000 Welt am Draht

With this duo working under the guise of Kelm, one of individuals behind this might already be known to some from his workings in projects such as Skalp and Kenotaph (both of which had releases out on Tesco and Functional respectively). Anyway, in regard to this project the first track is a whopping 34 minutes, which makes for quite a lengthy introduction! Dualities of texture are evident here, this track working on two levels: one of lower death ambient drone styling, the other on higher end sonic experimentations akin to Daniel Menche's subdued works. Selected textures hint at rhythms when also sporadically mixed with random-esque sounds and scraping elements, but overall things are firmly entrenched in the slow evolution camp. Dense catatonic beats in various coagulated configurations weave throughout the middle segment and continue to lurk throughout until close to the 29 minute mark, where the home stretch of sub bass textures are explored. More easily digestible than the mouthful of the first, the second track is an exploration of mid bass rhythmic distortion and insectile sounds, the third of furnace blasts, machinery drones and fractures electronics which reminds me of a very noisy version of Hazard's new sound explorations. Alien vocalisations, weird textures and rhythms, static bursts and an underlying sub and mid, electronic and bass drones abound on track 4, making for an eclectic piece or new school 'Mego' styled sounds. The split level of sound again surfaces on track 5 with deep sub bass textures, liquidous/electronic mid ranged elements mixed with what sounds like scattered field recordings sampled from within a disused factory. Overall this track lacks that certain something - not quite sure what... To close the set far off thunderous sounds and signal bleeps of track 6 swing into chaotic but slightly rhythmic territory, disembodied voices appearing sporadically. Although it took me a few listens to warm to this release (mostly due to collecting my overall impressions of the variance of sounds) my thoughts have solidified in favour of appreciation and subsequent praise for these dark experimental sonics.

Klangstabil (Ger) "Sprite Storage Format" LP 2000 Ant-Zen

With the concept of this release revolving around tracks created from a Gameboy as the main sound source, you are assured an unusual listen. An obvious hint of cheesy

computer game sounds is unavoidable, but these elements are actually cut and looped into patterns and sequences that create credible sounding tracks. Mostly chugging computer glitches and segments are looped into discernible format which seem to hold for most of the tracks' lengths. 'Raw Stripping' is less recognizable as being generated from computer game music, a sinister electronic track of malfunctioning software origin. Complexities of rhythms and beats gradually structure themselves around the track's core making for quite a noisy, static-riddled piece. What could only be a Mario Boys type tune is looped on 'Symmetrical Reduction' that creates quite a quirky groove within the repetitive choppy static beats. More obvious Gameboy looped tunes are found on 'Japanese Rom's, here relying less on beat structures other than straight programmed noises. The Gameboy inspiration goes even a step further in regards to packaging, with group photos taken and printed via a Gameboy camera and printer and with the shape and clear insert of the slip sleeve cover likewise looking like an actual Gameboy. I will admit that I initially bought this due to the gimmick factor (and wanting to hear what such a project would sound like), yet overall this is a surprisingly compelling listen.

Klood (Fra) "Gag - Hamin" 7"EP 1999 Drone Records

Sticking to the formula of a lot of Drone titles, this is yet another take on slow morphing drone sounds. 'Eagla' on side A has full bodied analogue synth lines that compose sparse tunes and in turn create bleak visions of barren arctic wastelands. Sounds seep out in every direction towards the distant horizon giving a spatial resonance to the minimalist sound and movement of the tracks. 'Juste de Passage' on side B has a sound more closely associated with guitar treatments and textures, and is a more active piece of sound exploration. Deep echoed sounds and distortion layers rise and fall throughout, with mid-ranged notes playing a barely composed tune (a subdued Contrastate could be a comparison here). Overall both tracks have barren somberness to them which is certainly to my liking. On the aesthetic front, it's a pity that this is pressed into ugly pink vinyl.

La Maison Moderne (Aut) "Day after Day" MCD HuaRuk/WKN (via Tesco Organisation)

My, my, what will hardened industrial fans think of Albin Julius of Der Blutharsch trying his hand at a dance music project? Not much I'm sure, but here it is for us to marvel and/or scratch our craniums at. Though the opening track 'Spiel Suber' presents itself as up-tempo and playful, it still infuses distant air raid sirens, sampled German vocal segments and bomb explosions that would not be out of place on a Der Blutharsch track. Up-tempo yet brooding, the cyclica; noises/programmed tunes and constant mid-paced beat of 'Welcome to Paradise' contains more vocal samples and even real vocals, again akin to what has been presented by Der Blutharsch. Although still up-tempo, 'Day after Day' has a much more dark trance-inducing edge, and the repeated vocal line is somewhat more prominent ('day after day . . . nothing changes'). Stomping beats and sub orchestral melody characterise 'Sea of Love and Hate', and while a late breaking programmed tune sees the track to its conclusion, it later reveals a fifth hidden track of mid-paced trip hop beats and celebratory type tunes - very pleasing indeed! Overall the sound is quite eclectic - both modern and retrospective at the same time. Hints of orchestral/martial themes are also infused deep within the backing, mainly due to the rigidity of selected pieces, and if you listen intently you can actually pick the trademark song structure and style of Albin. Flouting any 'rules' that people may want to impose on artists in regard to what they can and cannot do, Albin has created a very interesting and listenable take on the dance music genre.

Law (USA) "Vindication and Contempt" CD 2000 Triumvirate

Having put an LP out on Ant-Zen some years back and then falling seemingly quiet, Law have burst back into action with a succession of recent and forthcoming releases (the most recent being the "Wading Knee Deep in your Blood" LP reviewed last issue). Like that LP, 'Vindication and Contempt' was recorded in 1997 and has been only now released on the new label, Triumvirate, thus representing an extremely powerful release for a label's debut (and Mitchell Altum, the man behind Law, has a partnership in Triumvirate). Cascading sonic waves, pulsing (manipulated) beats and slow grinding electronics waver, prior to the 'hollow' introductory sermon of Mitchell - at first almost morose and regretful - later solidifying the anger of delivery as the barrage of electronics take hold. 'No One Will Find Them' takes a slightly different tangent in that a strummed acoustic guitar is sporadically fed into the sound collage along with more segments of Mitchell's multi-layered spoken vocals. Whilst some power electronics artists are content in having their vocals heavily treated and barely decipherable here Law has something to say and wants you to hear, contemplate and UNDERSTAND his message of contempt for the masses - let's just hope you're not among them.... Again another sound tangent is explored where 'A Place of Refuge, a Test of Commitment' utilises a repetitive string (synthetically generated) melody on one level with controlled electronics churning below. The shimmering tones of 'You Have No Choice' give an almost ambient feel, yet Law would never choose to be that subtle, ensuring the lurking harsher (controlled) tones are constantly threatening dissent (which occurs in a partly recognisable guitar layer). Mitchell really demonstrates his understanding and control of suspense throughout this track, effortlessly pushing the composition into many sections whilst constantly increasing intensity throughout the sordid journey. The massive orchestral strains of 'Locked Down Solid' are quickly obliterated in the noisiest track thus far, replete with chainsaw tones, rhythmic machine clatter, screeching tortured voices (really too many layers to reasonably count) amassed into a weighty multi (sonic) dimensional whole. The crystalline and more sharply defined textures of 'Unknown Command' and 'Fluctuating Tensile Strength' again expand Law's sound, running a fine line between relaxing ambient and sinister sounds, with the grating textures never far away. The album overall sees the elements of sound generally working on two tangents - those with swirling layers (almost organic in feel) and those layers of machine-like sound textures and programming, all processed and expertly combined to create the stunning final result. In part some of the tones and structure remind me of an early to mid 90s project Allegory Chapel Ltd. (who seem to have all but disappeared) or otherwise akin to Stratvm Terror; yet these comparisons give only a marginal indication of what to expect, as essentially Law has too many defining characteristics of its own. Beyond recommended.

LeftHandedDecision (USA) "Instinct and Emotion" 2000 Crionic Mind

This is a disc which demands focussed listening throughout, which I guess is not a difficult task when considering how punishing this is! 'Innate Perception' introduces the disc with sonic earthquake tones, which seem to have been mixed with sinister intent to destroy speakers before the disc goes even close to being played out (I think this quality may have a little something to do with Phil Easter being behind the mastering desk). For the most part there is a mid-ranged level of static going on here, but the pure brute force comes with the grinding sub bass tones that can be felt vibrating your internal organs. Although still very chaotic like what preceded it, 'Self Restraint' has a slower brooding edge and with a few sweeping noises tends to remind me of a much noisier Stratvm Terror. With tracks 1 through 6 playing out between 36 seconds to just under 5 minutes each, track 7 ('Isopraxism') arrives at a whopping 37 minutes! Starting with what is comparatively quiet (for this album, anyway) grinding electronic feedback squirms over a subsonic underbelly, moving slowly toward slow grating territory that just continues to multiply in force and density. There appear to be vocals and vocal samples somewhere in there, but they are just too mangled to comprehend what is being conveyed. The direction of the track (if you could even call it a direction) is to forge forever forward to increase the sonic intensity via any means possible, including some high-pitched ear drum assaults (although the concluding passage has mid ranged bass flow to it in a less harsh guise). Hidden tracks 9 through 23 all contain silence but strangely range in length from 4 to 24 seconds (hmmm...I'm not really sure what this is meant to signify); however the real hidden track comes at track 24. A scraping death industrial pulse introduces this as by far the quietest piece, prior to a full sampled song being fed into the sound destruction devices of the group, with sporadic pieces of the track rising to the surface of the maddening noise (as if watching a drowning man coming up for air). Without finishing there, a hidden track within a hidden track appears, which for some reason has mangled snippets of what sounds like two individuals having a conversation at a party with none other than MC Hammer playing in the background?! (I don't even want to know what was going on there...). Overall as much as the tracks presented do not sound formally composed, I'm sure there would have been at least some framework planning if this is in fact mostly improvised. In that I am reluctant to regularly play this at high volumes due to the speaker shredding qualities, I have tended to opt for a more restrained volume that has uncovered a certain relaxing ambience to the crispy sub sonic forcefulness of the wall of sound. Not quite pure noise and not quite power electronics, this has melded the harshest parts of both to create something quite unique that to my ears reflects a certain sound inherent in the American scene.

Francisco Lopez (Ita) "Untitled #90" CD 1999 Pre-Feed

With one 45 minute-long track Mr Lopez delivers another tonal soundscape work of field and natural type recordings. Shrill in its incessant high pitched-hum, the obvious sampling of insect sounds remains a constant throughout. Located deep underneath the insect sounds are low washes of waves lapping at the shore, which not surprisingly become more prominent throughout. Shifts in direction are minimal at best, and occur so slowly that they are barely noticed, with one segment of insect sounds traversing to the next. The lack of obvious treatment to any of the sound layers gives a realistic vibe and I would not be at all surprised if this was a pure environmental recording. At low volume the high pitched hum becomes almost a drone, but becomes increasingly piercing and invasive as volume is increased. For the type of sound work this is, it works best when put on in the background, allowing it to envelope you whilst you mind is focussed on something else. Surely not for collective listening, this is one way to mentally escape the city even if it can't be achieved physically.

Megaptera (Swe) "Electronic Underground" CD 2000 Slaughter Productions

Given that Peter Nystrom has decided to quit all further work by this group, "Electronic Underground" is a posthumous re-release of an early tape (unfortunately it does not seem that the scheduled DCD on CMI will ever eventuate). Being an older recording, the tracks do differ from the death industrial musings of "Disease" and "Curse of the Scarecrow", yet they are still recognisable as Megaptera. While the other albums I am familiar with were full of sweeping atmospheres and packed with movie sample dialogue, these take a more singular approach in dynamics likewise mostly without the sampled voices. The cold pulse is still here, yet the predominant sweeping atmospheres mixed heavily with slow programmed beats/ rhythms have been replaced with more of a straightforward electronic character. The cold sterile atmospheres of the title track both in parts 1 and 2 set the scene of the album via sparse (slow to mid paced) percussion, static drones and mild noise. 'Metal Blaster' ups the level of noise, focussing on noisy drones and scattered metallic clatter for the most part, solidifying into a rumbling solid mass of sound. 'Megaptera Theme' beginning with the lapping of waves at a shore and the grunts and groans of nameless things sound as if it was recorded in inky blackness of an underground lake cavern. Moving on from the opening passage the track slowly meanders through segments of subdued drones and urgent static attacks. 'Hypnotic Fear' is particularly noteworthy with a distant furnace blast textures and pounding drums, while low drawn out keyboard notes gradually shift between tones. Midway though the beat becomes more complex (complete with cavernous echo) to create a very ritualized vibe. 'Last Machinery' is just that being the final piece on the disc, sounding much like an idling motor (soon to be empty of its fuel of flesh and bone) and could even be partly comparable to some of Brighter Death Now's pieces. At close to 60 minutes if you have been missing the ultra dark ritual industrial sounds that characterized the early 90's Swedish scene this should be an ample fix for your craving.

Daniel Menche (USA) "Scourge" 3" CD 1999 G.M.B.H.

Nice packaging on this item, with the 3" CD housed in a tiny gatefold containing imagery of bullet shattered glass. As for the sonics it contains a single 21 minute piece of trademark Menche sound manipulations - totally engulfing in all its electro acoustic power. Thick sonic slabs of sound are gradually erected around the ear drums with faint acoustics and subtle textures intermixed completing the desolate aural aura. The drawn out textures give the piece a slow evolving essence which eventually multiply into a tense segment of suspenseful cinematic tones. At around 10 minutes the former segment abruptly ceases for yet another mid range section to commence which is less subtle and more scattered overall (basically sounding like 'track 2'). Again the 'multiplier effect' is used building and removing layers of sound texture creating some truly contemplative moments. The last few minutes take on the guise of 'track 3' which sounds as if cockroaches are being slowly crushed between two plates of glass

- crispy and crackly indeed! While Mr Menche may have become more subtle overall with his recent sound-workings (in comparison to high much noisier earlier releases) in essence the results are becoming more stunning with each new release.

Militia (Bel) "Kingdom of our Lord" MCD 1999 Praxis Dr Bearmann

2 tracks at 21 minutes, this is not nearly as long as I would like, but then again at least it is a Militia item! Mixing almost discordant orchestral sentiments with rough and repetitive percussion, Militia manage to create uniquely heavy atmospheres on this MCD. Title track opening, the knife edge atmospheres fold and overlap prior to the incessant martial ritualistic beats, tribal chimes and general machinery clatter taking hold. Having an off kilter sway about the rhythm it also runs the knife edge...somewhere between hypnotic and rousing, with the ending passage engulfing all elements into a (subdued) almost power electronic tone. Second track ("Maschinezimmer") is even more percussive based and using quite hyper forceful beats and mixed background clatter. Likewise as with the first track the beat has a slightly groggy sway which is kept in check with an understated orchestral string segment. Though less atmospheric overall than the first track (and for me less engaging), it is still a good listen. Packaging on this will one infuriate those who only like jewel cases for easy storage....housed in an A4 sizes fold out envelope involving imagery and text to complement the content of each track.

Militia (Bel) "The Black Flag Hoisted" 2xCD 2000 Tactical Recordings

This item has certainly been highly anticipated, being the official third release in the Militia 'Statement' Trilogy (New European Order 3xLP and Nature Revealed 2CD were the first two parts). Straight of the mark, the packaging does not disappoint with a large fold out card cover, larger insert poster, 2 CD's with individual slip cases and, to top the whole thing off, a medium sized black flag with the Militia logo printed at the centre. Truly amazing! For all the right-wing sounding implications of the packaging, titles, etc., the ideas displayed within the music and cover are actually from a 'leftist' perspective covering anarchist philosophies and the actions of the Animal Liberation Front, among others. The cover even includes a listing of the organisations, documents and statements that inspired them, and which obviously reflect their cause. The music itself falls somewhere between the N.E.O sub-orchestral sound and the rousing percussive style of the above reviewed MCD. CD1 of the set contains contributions from many artists, (both in the form of vocals and soundscapes) with some of the notables being Bastard Noise, Waste Matrix and Con-Dom. The first track of CD1 quickly moves from low rumblings to snare and tympani martial percussion and the trademark horn blasts. Here the scene is set, with the track diverting quickly into another low soundscape courtesy of Bastard Noise (with foreign ranted vocal), prior to third brilliant track kicking in - a massively heavy loop and metal percussive track. Repetitively hypnotic, this is Militia at their best. Jumping between low, brooding soundscapes and massive percussion, the group do both brilliantly, remaining solidly grounded and focussed at all times. The chugging/surging oil barrel rhythms and loops of 'Die Theorielosigkeit des Anarchismus' are superb with a new element of a piano line thrown in randomly. 'Light and Truth' contains a soaring organ loop, keyboard layers shrill trumpet blasts, hinting that something is approaching - that being the following track, 'In Mitten von Kamph', which after a slow voice text sample introduction, moves back into the aggressive percussion territory (yet this is subdued by Militia standards, set against a sorrowful orchestral melody). CD2 does not appear to contain the input of any guest artists, and is thus an even purer form of Militia than on the first disc. The sparse soundscapes and use of a didgeridoo on 'Liberecana Anarkista Kolonio' hints at the sound of the "Nature Revealed" CD, albeit with electronically-generated sounds, and the straightforward mid-paced percussion of 'Manifest' includes a proclamation (in full anarchist flair) of the clear agenda of Militia. The introductory tensile soundscape of 'Black Wolves Music' includes a further Militia statement, with the track again moving toward heavy percussion; yet here a standard drum kit is used along with bass to create a quick-moving piece that expands on their traditional sound. 'Anarchist Movement for Collective and Direct Action' again uses the drum kit and standard raucous percussion, with swaying background loop and didgeridoo. 'Final Statement' contains a brooding and shrill backing loop, percussion stripped back to tympani, oil barrel & clanging symbols. The vocals of this track take various words/ideas that are stated in a commanding style, and then immediately loop them backwards over themselves to intriguing result. One last other thing to add in regards to the music is that the last track on both CD's come courtesy of the Nas Dom-Slomsek Choir, with quite beautiful dual gender vocal harmonies. Both politically and musically heavy, this is simply a brilliantly conceived and realised work.

The Mirror Reveals (USA) "Frames of Teknicolor" CD 2000 Middle Pillar

Whatever Middle Pillar has released thus far has been a pleasure to listen to (be it the ethereal folk type bands of the more obscure dark ambient projects) with this, the fourth release, falling into the former category. The fragility of the female vocals (Kit Messick) set against the likewise fragile and subtle clean guitar work (James Babbo) contains a true essence of dark brooding beauty only further enhanced by the vast and mostly delicate musical backing (piano, keyboards and violin). Coming off the back of two tracks adhering closely to the above description 'Moebius Stripped' is the closest this comes to a (slow) gothic rock track, only due to the programmed beat, but more than amply avoiding the pitfalls of the said genre. The deep reverberating bass of 'In a box' works wonders as an introduction - keyboard atmospheres solidifying, duet male/ female vocals flirting with a lone violin - all amounting to a soothing gentle wave of introspection. There is a celebratory beauty to 'In a Memory' given the slightly up-tempo drum-kit beat, putting it in the leagues of the excellent experimental prog group the 3rd and the Mortal. Without doubt 'The Undying Man' is the most sorrowful piece with the depressive guitar tune, sweeping keyboards and male vocals - respite only in the female vocals and riff of the chorus. 'Frozen in Time' crystallising the finally of the album comes with a prominent dark piano/ guitar piece again using the building atmosphere of keyboards, slow beat and the ever stunning female vocals. Bitter sweet sorrow at its finest.... Lastly taking notice of the quality production, the expanse of space contained within the tracks ensures an additionally vast and haunting listen thanks to the skills of both Bryn Dall and Derek Rush (of other affiliated projects). Having released only items from their own backyard (New York) Middle Pillar thus far are creating an identifiable face to an obviously flourishing scene. Lets hope the torch is held equally high for subsequent releases.

Moljebka Pulve (Swe) "Koan" CD 2000 Eibon Records / Pre-Feed

In their minor introduction on CMI's "Estheticks of Cruelty" compilation, Moljebka Pulve presented a track of stilted rhythmic static, which is a far cry from the much more mature and hypnotic drone atmospheres of this, their debut CD. Thick in brooding sonic intensity, these densely drawn-out drones have a certain element that could be traced to treated guitar layers, yet this perception is more from a tonal perspective as opposed to being clearly and specifically recognizable. Pulsating textures probe with low end intensity, the sonics buffed with smooth rounded edges - no sharp or abrasive noises in earshot. Deep rhythmic pulses work up to mildly urgent intensity on 'Parshva' despite the backing remaining subdued. Obvious slow movement and evolution of sound is the format, yet this is exactly the hallmark of drone type works that enable one to get lost in the morphing atmospheres. At first some underlying scattered sounds on 'Rujing' sound more akin to a faulty mix of the track, but they do consolidate into a rough rhythm in the last minutes. Between 5 to 13 minutes of sound expanse are covered on each of the six tracks, and the cover has a visually pleasing image of a nondescript shape and colour.

Monokrom (???) "Monokrom" CD 2000 Ant-Zen

Power noise? Abrasive ambience? Rhythmic industrial? This release is somehow none of these yet all at the same time. The embossed black paper cover gives absolutely no information at all about the group's recording or track listings, but the disc itself contains 11 tracks, that average between 5-7 minutes in length, creating a running time that verges on the maximum amount of sound your can cram into this format. Fractured soundscapes of subdued and chaotic electronic derived resonance, flicker between heavy and heavier sonic atmospheres. Even when quiet in actual sound it can't shake of its dark cloaked aura. Track three contains metallic machine gun rhythms of shredding intensity that blast out between the quieter rhythmic segments, whilst track four solidifies between squealing blasts of noise and mid-paced beats. Disembodied voices wander aimlessly throughout track seven, a piece which could be described as an electro-noise-ritual summoning that randomly weaves beats, voices, sounds, and textures. The slower textural intensity of track eight works well as a very modern sounding piece of industrial ambience - the blips, beeps and modem-like sounds giving it a modern edge. Track nine then skews off on another tangent - a noisy factory-type rhythmic machinery piece that swirls amidst aggressive sound loops. As for track ten, if I heard this at random without being told who it was by, I would have certainly picked it as one of the most aggressive Con-Dom tracks, consisting of squealing feedback and screeched and gargled vocal distortion. This is of course not the case at all, but it would have had me fooled and, yes, I would have to say that this short piece differs quite a bit from the remaining tracks. Slow building tension and metallic clatter see the disc to its conclusion on track eleven, where the sound spectrum encompasses everything from sustained high-pitched notes to the guttural sub bass beneath. Slow and atmospheric yet tense and chaotic, this track is the perfect way to conclude a broadly expansive album. For a round-about comparison, I would have to offer up a couple in the form of Morgenstern maybe mixed with a hint of Imminent Starvation's slower or beat-less tracks off the "Human Dislocation" CD - so, yes, in essence this has a very 'Ant-Zen' sound. For those who can't get enough of the disc there is an exclusive MP3 track available only on the website - but to gain access you must first own the CD. This bonus track does display a certain cohesion with the other tracks, but it is by far the most straightforward beat-oriented track (hint: the website access code is visibly imbedded on the music side of the disc). Happy hunting.

MZ412 (Swe) "Legion Ultra" 7" EP 2000 Cold Meat Industry

The basic premise of this item was that anyone interested was invited to send in whatever source material they wanted, and then MZ412 would record two tracks for a limited 7" EP. Myself having sent in contributory sounds I'm not sure if my opinions are somewhat biased . . . but anyway here goes! Likewise when anticipating what to expect, I was not sure if I would be able to pick out any of my contributory elements within the overall track dynamics, but surprisingly there they were smattered throughout. All in all twelve the contributions of twelve 'individuals' were utilized, but I use this term 'individuals' with a grain of salt as I remember someone saying their cats had provided material (would that be 'Cleopatra Velvetpaws' and 'Galaxy Glitterpants' perhaps?!). Anyway, I guess whoever has had input into this will listen to the tracks quite differently and take away a completely different impression when hearing their own sounds within the tracks. For a general overview I will add that the tracks are surprisingly MZ412 in character insofar as they take various sounds and manipulate them into rhythmic patterns; however the sound is here slightly more harsh and gritty than normal, I guess mostly due to the nature of the contributions. Side A contains a noisy and chaotic yet rhythmic piece that begins with swirling vocal distortion and feedback, before high-pitched squeals and fractured looped static give it some sense of movement. An amazing reverberating bass echo, the main core of the piece is offset against a high pitched looped squeal (I believe I may be responsible for this sound) and likewise looped vocal-type sample. The track manifests a classic MZ412 song structure which is exploited here to stunning effect. Side B encompasses a subdued sound of slow modulations, but ends up being noisier than the first with a furnace blasting static sound that is loosely fused together in grinding loops of low, mid and high ranged sound (incidentally, I can pick out more of my contributions on this number). Calming down for only a brief moment, the track lurches back into a finale of abrasive textures that conclude the EP. In short, here are two great tracks that won't disappoint any MZ fan and will be collectable given this is limited to 412 copies in white and 412 in black vinyl. A recommended item (but of course I would have said that!).

Necrophorus (Swe) "Drifting in Motion" CD 2000 Crown Control Activities

The original title for this being 'tundra stillness' when combined with the actual title furnished upon release gives quite a good synopsis of the atmospheres on offer here. There is an obvious calmness to the flow illustrating a bleak wintry haze, surely influenced by the use of a block of ice as part of the sound source material. The first Necrophorus CD is probably my least favourite of Peter Andersson's works, but the passage of time that passed between the recordings has ensured this is leaps and bounds ahead of the debut. With little to compare to the debut, other than the calm new aged tinged atmospheres, this CD works perfectly as a slow cohesive journey

into the arctic wastelands of the mind. And while this has more in common with the meandering soundscapes on the Yoga 10", release there are no middle eastern elements as included on that limited vinyl. Solidifying a vision in the mind's eye, the amplified sound of the source material is akin to the permafrost slowly cracking under the weight of the arctic caps, further intermixed with slow drawn-out keyboard passages, minimal drones and non-descript chimes. Selected moments veer off into more sinister atmospheres such as on 'ice shifting' (containing an air of urgency), while 'Frost' better illustrates a passage of mournful emotional desolation (verging on some of the most depressive segments of Raison d'être's works). The exploration of the transformation of ice from solid to liquid on 'Partial Melt' is particularly evocative set against the droning melodies and distant shrill calls of a whale - a primal call evoking the archaic forces of nature. Although quite lengthy at 57 minutes (over 6 tracks), when listening to this time feels as though it has been momentarily suspended. Firstly there is the feeling of time passing quite quickly (despite the slow motion pace compositions), but secondly confounded by the lingering perception that a great mental distance has been travelled.... Nothing more to add, except than that this is yet another handiwork of Peter Andersson that is essential to your collection.

Nocturne (Fra) "Kommando Holocauste" 10"EP 1999 Old Europa Cafe

Being my first introduction to this group, I think I will have to try and track down their previous 10" EP on Tesco if this is anything to go by. Versions I and II of the title track are an interesting blend of almost power-electronic-inspired atmospheric interlaced with orchestral samples and historical vocal snippets. This is not noisy or forceful enough to be true power electronics and likewise too skittish to be a dark ambient/ industrial project. Layering plays an important role in the shifting dynamics of the sounds, yet by maintaining a sense of controlled tension it gives the impression of a vertical expanse rather than the more conventional 'breadth' of sound. Track I sets the tone by being more controlled with a couple of searing interludes, but it is track two where things take a more dramatic turn through the condemning implications of the forceful sound layering. Initially set under a wartime recording, the intent of the rising tones can certainly be felt, being more condensed and focussed, and gradually multiplying in strength. As the static hits mid to high range distortion, more era vocals are intermixed as the 'rising/falling' dynamic established surges towards its demise. Comparisons to parts of LJDLP's sound are the most obvious in this case, and while there were previous statements to the effect that this group was once part of the aforementioned project, it would now appear that was actually a misunderstanding. Regardless this is another nice piece of vinyl that has been coming out of the OEC camp of late.

Northaut (Nor) "The Ominous Silence" CDR 1999 Northaut

In amongst the better known groups there are always some unknowns that rise out of the depths to produce quality self-released items. After following a group email link and browsing Northaut's website, I was sufficiently intrigued to ask for a review copy . . . and in a situation stranger than fiction the group informed me that they had already sent off a promotional copy only two days before! Mixing rain drenched field recordings with synth-generated textures, 'Might and Misanthropy' commences the proceedings, awash with sweeping bass tones, understated piano tune, and mournful violin passage that gives it a very good dark ambient/neo-classical hybrid feel. At close to 13 minutes things meander along slowly, veering off on a couple of darker, more subdued tangents, including an acoustic guitar interlude, a section of folk oriented flute and tortured vocal shrieks akin to what is found in black metal. The track 'Northaut' rumbles on in a cavernous guise with shifting sound treatments buried in the mix, later with harsh whispers and a barely accentuated piano tune. More field recordings and an industrial noise pulse make up the backing of 'Der bor en frost her inne', while an acoustic tune form the main musical counterpart. Gradually things take a 'downward' turn (by that I mean 'good!') with dark factory clatter and a sustained (synth-produced) string movement. 'De sorte traer' again utilises the acoustic guitar in amongst an intricately textured sound backing while 'Running out of time' reminds me somewhat of early raison d'être with sweeping layers, chant like drones and church bells. The track however remains distinctive with multiple samples of ticking clocks and a lone voice somewhat desperately stating the tracks title. On first hearing 'In rain' the piano tune sounded a little off time but on subsequent listens the off kilter playing only enhances its charm. 'And I Fade Away' is the last track on offer and is a little more experimental than the previous tracks with its mid-paced keyboard tune set amongst dungeon-like clatter, dripping water and far off noises (attention is held in the fore with some spoken vocals). The overall aura of this release quite reminds me of Ildfrost's 'Natanel' CD, although this is somewhat less composed with a larger variety of sound sources. What I guess I am getting at is that there is a comparison to the overall dark atmosphere and morose classical feel of the stated item. The atmospheres presented definitely show clarity of ideas and I think the use of natural field recordings as a backdrop really enhance the depth of sound. Piano movements, string sections and acoustic guitars are used sparingly, and only enhances the atmosphere at the appropriate times. Although a CDR, it is still encased in professionally printed and presented booklet, complete with full sized printed CD label. A group to keep an eye out for.

Novatron (USA) "New Rising Sun" CD 1999 Cold Spring Records

Being oblivious to the previous musical projects of the main man Anthony Di Franco, I can't really offer any comparisons. However, having Novatron billed as 'solar music', the spacious and inky blackness of the sonic tones certainly do this title justice. Throbbing swelling dynamics and textural sound, 'Kore' commences the epic solar journey, sweeping into 'Axis One' and simultaneously intermixing effect-laden beats to stunning impact. On first rotations I had the sounds pegged for heavily treated guitar generated source material, but the cover revealed that instead that samplers, electronics and a myriad of synths alone were utilised with a bass. The shimmering elements of 'Inamorata' in part bring to mind Atomine Elektrine's "Archimetical Universe" disc, however the bass loaded beat and more abrasive elements steers into darker sonic territory, choir like tones keeping the piece afloat from sinking into pure darkness. The repetitive succession of fast-paced throbbing sounds of 'Alloy/Sorcerer' is the only drawback I can find on the album, being far too repetitive and high in the mix; yet putting these criticisms aside, the track hits a great segment of harsh sonic noises and random pounded beats. The drawn-out drones of 'Total Mass Retain' work on the lower sonic levels, while other slightly scathing elements hovering just overhead. Symmetry and balance is the feeling conveyed by this piece, grasping you in its breathtaking sonic vortex. The rumbling, imploding textures of 'Cobra-Bora' could easily illustrate the last moments of a dying super nova (does this signify the end of the journey?), yet things do settle into sweeping multi-dimensional drones (I'm still convinced these sounds have a guitar-like resonance), choosing to take a drawn out path to the disc's conclusion. Around the nine and a half minutes mark, a sinister dynamic stages a takeover encompassing deeper and harsher drones, almost emulating a symphonic character. With the stunning fiery tones of the cover, set against an inky-black background and overwritten with silver print, the cover is the perfect counterpart to the sounds on offer. As with everything Cold Spring put their name to regardless of style, you can always be guaranteed a fantastic release, with Novatron being no exception.

Novy Svet (Aut) "Faccia a faccia" CD 1999 HuaRuk/WKN (via World Serpent Distribution)

This CD is both bizarrely strange yet highly intriguing. Signed to the label of Albin Julius (of Der Blutharsch infamy) and knowing his penchant for folk music, this might begin to explain this group, but not entirely. The opening track is somewhere between folk and jazz with plucked double bass and up-tempo snare/ symbol percussion, while two off kilter Austrians sing in an almost drunken fashion?!! The second song is no less weird, with slow beer hall piano playing, more of those sung/spoken vocals, trippy keyboard sounds and some sort of ritual percussion. Track three takes a more standard industrial subdued rhythmic approach similar to Deutsch Nepal (but don't forget how weird some of his stuff is!) yet the vocals again set this well apart. 'Puro Rumore/Puo Amore' runs between sections of slow and up-tempo accordion playing, with the vocal treatment and presentation totally overshadowing the fact that - yes, an accordion is indeed being used! (Drunken accordion folk music indeed?!) The ritual and martial undercurrent of 'Brigada Budocnost', with its dark industrial intensity, is almost out of place on this album (the next track consists of yet more mid-tempo beer hall piano playing and vocal chanting!). The drunken sway is again displayed on 'Operazione Runa', as if the group were literally trying to compose a marching tune while heavily intoxicated (and I might add that however it was composed it has resulted in a great but quirky track). The last track, 'Sala, 19.00 MEZ', has a distant and muffled orchestral sound, and as it is mixed with crowd voices and church bells to achieve a field recording vibe, it is easily the most subdued piece on the disc. After 10 minutes of silence the hidden track appears with the accordion brought out for one last drunken lament before this bizarre musical oddity draws to a close. I guess this CD would really be only for the adventurous music enthusiast, but as much as my review might make it sound like it would not work, it is actually a highly addictive release that while has confounded me, certainly has not disappointed.

Nurse with Wound (Eng) "Alice the Goon" MCD 2000 United Dairies (via World Serpent)

I don't know how much I am convinced by this MCD, but for collectors it is a re-release of a limited (read: 500 copies) one-sided LP released in association with the Musiques Ultimes Festival held in France in 1995. Track one '(I don't want to have) Easy Listening Nightmares', is a way out and totally quirky piece with a big band type brass and percussion loop that is overlaid with sound snippets, noises, saxophone drones, etc. The main loops act as the platform with limited variation and movement throughout the track's nine odd minutes. 'Prelude to Alice the Goon' mostly contains deep double bass rhythm/tune, and tripped out vocals (with full vocal treatments). There is more movement in this passage of time, and works best when the vocals are not presented with other broad background sounds, sparse vocal choirs and percussion. The third untitled track was not on the original LP, but was recorded at the same time. Quite minimalist, it commences as a low drone with distant voices and an untold echoed depth. Vocals become more prominent as mournful wails whilst likewise the shimmering textures increase with metallic texture and for its atmosphere this would easily have to be the best track on here. As for the digipack cover, it contains some nice visuals of strange line drawings.

Of the Wand and the Moon (???) "Sol ek Sa" 7" EP 2000 Hau Ruk

Limited info about the group comes with this one, however two very different styles are showcased. Side A contains one track ('My Blackflamed Sun') of drawn-out ritual/ industrial drones, slow beats and scattered sounds. The sound progresses in the expected manner - starting slow, and gradually building to climactic moments. To swap sounds completely, the second side of the vinyl contains two stunning two neo-folk tunes. The acoustic guitar and low spoken vocals of 'Sol ek Sa MIIX' do bring to mind the likes of Death in June, yet the clarinet accompaniment works particularly well in giving the track its own distinctive sound. A track of beautiful misanthropic wonder. The depth of sound of 'Lion Serpent Sun' is further highlighted with the acoustic strains being overshadowed by piano, and backing horns, percussion, etc., creating again a fantastic piece. Though the vocals do not rise above a low whisper, they still remain high in the mix. I for one will be certainly looking out for future releases from this new group.

Of Unknown Origin (USA) "Seven Ovens of the Soul" CD 1998 Suffering Clown

The two artists behind this (Derek Rush of Dream in Dust and Bryin Dall of 4th Sign of the Apocalypse), already have a well-established history of collaborative efforts - whether on Middle Pillar's 'A Murder of Angels' CD of last year or their various contributions to each other's projects (to name just a few). Of Unknown Origins is yet another project birthed out of their collective interest in dark experimental sonics with this album taking a broad dark ambient approach, containing smatterings of unusual segments and mildly crispy electronics. The tortured vocals of 'From the Womb' form part of this short introductory piece, before a looped and sampled horn sound starts with 'Meditation Ladder', complete with spoken psychological instructions (sampled of course) on how to immerse yourself in a subconscious mind frame. This track is essentially unusual in vibe rather than being specifically dark, however things do take a bleaker turn on 'Saturnine Night' with bursts a mild static and loose rhythmic framework. A style comparable to that of Deutsch Nepal is presented on 'Chemognosis', with looped mechanized rhythms and cold metallic sounds; however, the sound of a lone guitar sets it somewhat apart from this initial comparison (with it fading in and out at will throughout). Visions of barren wind-swept landscapes (mixed with distant

factory sounds) are evoked on 'Sphered in a Radiant Cloud' to good effect, raising in intensity as it progresses (and it even includes a tribal metallic beat in the last minutes). 'Urlo' continues with the tribal mind-set, with heavy (repetitive) percussive beat as the swirling sound textures align themselves in varying sweeping patterns. Deutsch Nepal is again brought to mind on 'Nemonik Entropy', with the central plodding bass tune and quirky off center programmed percussion surging forward in repetitive fashion. All in all this is another worthwhile listen, even if it's already a few years old.

Ohrenscherz (Ger) "Example Compilation" CDR 1999 self-released

As you can see from the title this is not an official release rather a collection of tracks from three releases of this group from this group from 1998 through 1999. I'm not sure how official these original items were, but I get the feeling they may have also been self-released. Anyway, unrelenting power/noise industrial is what we have here, ranging from pure noise attacks to the more hyper beat stabs. 'Fehlfunktion' presents the sounds of massive unidentified machinery in total over drive, intense in all its rough repetitive glory with enough obliterated feedback and scattered German vocal samples tossed into the meat grinders which are my speakers to bring a smile to my dial (in appreciation of course). The noise attack of 'Intro' aside, 'Tinitus' contains a cleaner yet no less metallic resonance in the pummeling beat structure. Blistering loops again of metallic origin (on 'Tote Liebe') really grab at the roots of what industrial music is all about (and not this mainstream fluff that passes as 'industrial' these days). Powerful, aggressive and all encompassing is this melding of two parts noise and three parts beat. 'Traum II' explores the use of feedback blasted vocals and a barely contained programmed tune that adds a further positive dimension to the later works of this group. The lurching loops and corrosive static of 'Deutscher Hass (sv)' contain a razor sharpness making this a premier power electronics number comparable to the likes of Genocide Organ, with the final track reverting to the power rhythms format. Overall the biggest comparison would be to the harder edged Ant-Zen and affiliated groups, in particular the likes of Converter. I will certainly be looking out for a new release, which I'm sure will eventuate on one label or another given the strength of this taster.

Oil10 (???) "Metastases" 12" EP 1999 Hymen

Siren generated rhythms and static oriented beats situates Oil10 in rather quirky yet groovy ambient/techno territory that is not all dissimilar to the stylistic approach of Black Lung. This comparison is further enhanced when the second track ('Shadows in the Sand') morphs off into an introduction of shimmering sub-bass pulses, later focussing around programmed 'blip'-oriented melody lines creating a very sci-fi styled vibe. The slow pace and extended length of this piece does make for a chilled-out aura that brings side A to its close. Side B begins with a much more evasive sound, where mid-paced beats drive the track forward amidst quickly-building loops and increasing complexity, while the tripped-out quirky blips that make up part of the tune again encompass a sci-fi edge. The final track is probably both the fastest and most straightforward piece – a slow, drawn-out droning tune over quick beat sequences, with random sounds adding to the various patterns being toyed with. Another nice item in the Hymen series of 12" EPs (where all vinyls have the same cover, except for the authentic postage stamps that detail the name of the artist and release).

Ordo Equitum Solis (Ita) "Metamorphosis - Personam Impono" CD 2000 World Serpent Distribution

Being serviced by World Serpent with promo items has given me the opportunity to hear groups that I am well aware of but, due to a lack of funds, have never gotten around to checking out (with O.E.S being such a group). For those familiar with the group the press release references that this CD has reached a level of maturation that was both not expected nor required so I guess this is saying something if you appreciated their past releases! Likewise my impressions of the group hearing them for the first time are of a positive slant. Following a classical/folk, male/female duo type path, shades of Dead Can Dance and other slight dark wave influences are evident (the dark wave influence I would attribute to the partial keyboard programming sound). These elements, along with sparse acoustics, bass melodies and the interplay of gender specific vocals, no doubt expand upon an established sound. The acoustic guitar and trumpet of 'Tomorrow Cries' nods to Death in June's sound on the "Rose Clouds" album, yet the female vocals presented in a very mainstream styled delivery which I hear is another variance to previous offering. The beautiful flowing instrumental track (incidentally titled 'Instrumental') is a brooding classical inspired piece which does not suffer greatly from the synthetic means of production. The percussive, acoustic guitar tracks (with related instrument embellishment) are the most numerous here, with each taking on different emotive qualities. On one of the later tracks the merging of the acoustic strums and deep cinematic classical melodies of 'Reprise' is where the album works at its best, but is a little disappointing as it lacks vocals. 'The Last Hopes in Me', the concluding piece, partly resolves my disappointment with the preceding track, here merging a more subdued backing with female vocals a lone piano line and mournful trumpet tunes. Surprisingly mainstream on many tracks, this CD is by no means a difficult listen, nor something that you have to have a lot of 'scene' baggage to appreciate, thus there could be quite wide appeal for this.

Orplid (Ger) "Orplid" CD 1999 Eis und Licht Tontrager

Having read an interview and recommendation in Descent Magazine 5# (and knowing they are spot-on with knowing what is worthwhile), I tracked down a copy of this CD. My search resulted in me obtaining the original slip cover version, however I hear this has been released with new packaging and maybe a bonus track or two. A deep orchestral marching ode opens the CD setting a shrill battlefield aura (snare and tympani's pound, brass horns bellow etc) prior to the main focus of the album presenting itself as dark melancholic apocalyptic folk music. 'Bruder Luzifer' presents complex arrangements of acoustic guitars playing brooding tunes and melodies, complemented with synth layers, and deep martial percussion. Vocals sung in their native tongue (being powerful and commanding in the mid-ranged presentation) certainly add to the aura. In regard to these vocals, 'Totenlied' bases itself around a vocal choir arrangement (sung by the male members), obtaining an intense heathen flavour. The title track differs again from what precedes it, being a stunning piano movement with flute accompaniment - male vocals softly sung against the fragile and beautiful piano tune. Intense acoustic tunes, a lone cello, volkish mouth harp and monkish chanted vocals embody an ode to the Norse God Balder (on a track of the same name), with the background screams acting as emotional catharsis. The folk marching ode of 'Jenseits von hier' uses electronic means to create the tunes, and here with female vocals taking the centre stage while male vocals act as a restrained backing. Apocalyptic acoustic folk music does not get much better than on 'Dan Abendland', whilst the straight sung vocals come close to sounding like Douglas P (the musical backing is far more folk-tinged, though). The last track is strange in its inclusion here that it starts as a crusty programmed dark drum and bass piece, with full nightclub crowd noise in the background. Once this segment is concluded, swirling winds and an angry German speech sample arrives full force, then falling back into field recording territory with rain and thunder, a slow acoustic tune presenting a mournful ballad for the final minutes. This track is a really good piece but it is just not something I would have expected given the overall flavor of the album. For a final comparison, if anyone has followed a band by the name of Ulver, (and in particular their second acoustic folk CD), this is a marker to what you can expect from Orplid and their stunning acoustic and vocal battle hymns.

Osso Exotico (Por) "VII" 7" EP 1999 Drone Records

Created via a church organ, this is not exactly how you would expect this to sound like given the drawn out essence of the pieces, yet the aura of sound does retain a slight resemblance to its origin (fleeting sounds spark this recognition). Likewise there is an unavoidable religious flair to the sounds, mainly due to the connotations associated with the choice of instrument, but this has more to do with preconceived notions than anything else. On both tracks a slow hazy warmth exudes from the grooves of the vinyl, with slow enveloping drones and deep cavernous sounds that rise and fall in volume during the slow journey of the two pieces. Essentially dark ambient pieces, these sit well with the likes of Amon and the more minimalist school of sound. Interestingly the packing sees the music pressed on clear vinyl and comes with a small packet of spices. Very tasty!

Ostara (Aus/ Ere) "Operation Valkrie" CDS 2000 World Serpent Distribution

Ostara (Aus/Ere) "Secret Homeland" CD 2000 World Serpent Distribution

Two items reviewed in one, mostly as the single was a limited to 1000 promotional copies containing one of the tracks off the upcoming album. The single certainly grabbed my attention, frustrating me that I would have to wait by the letterbox for the arrival of the full length it was taken from (luckily I only had to wait for a bit over a month). Continuing on from the former group Strength Through Joy, the name has now been changed and the musical orientation slightly altered, creating quite an interesting spin on the 'apocalyptic folk' sound. One of the first things that is evident is the crystalline clarity of the production, being full, rich and lively in all elements of vocals (which are mostly male with selected female backing), guitar (including slide), bass, drums, keyboards and the occasional cello. Apart from the production setting a standard above much in the genre, the use of a standard drum kit (rather than martial percussion), sends the music on a much more rock/folk tangent. 'Epiphany', the first off the mark, highlights the lyrical poetry and vocal delivery, being well sung in a mid range octave, encompassing lines such as "I believe in mysteries and I can see with clarity, the truth behind the veil, beneath the lie". Being set against keyboard layers and deep bass make the tragic acoustic strains of 'Operation Valkyrie' both a highlight as a single track and highlight of the album, being an ode to the myths of northern paganism and the strife facing Europe with the loss of such traditions. 'Midsummer Sunday' is a much calmer affair, coming across as a beautiful acoustic strummed celebration, complete with female vocal and cello accompaniment. 'Ways to Strength and Beauty' opens with a poetic metaphor, then becomes another stand-out track of subdued anger realised via the mid-paced acoustics, bagpipes and more forceful (marching) drumming. The rock/folk perspective mentioned earlier is again shown on 'Nostalgia for the Future', mainly due to the up-tempo guitar, drumming and violin passages. 'The Wolf's Door' (dare I say it) contains an almost low key prog-rock feel, with the following 'Beauty to Burn' also using a non characteristic drum pattern for this genre. Rounding out the album is 'Serpent's Wine', an optimistic sounding tune of mid-paced acoustic strummed and cello bowed bliss. In conclusion, as much as I feel this is a fantastic album from execution of musicianship through to production, at nearly 70 minutes these 12 tracks evince a certain 'sameness' to the sound. Maybe with a few less tracks this would have been all the stronger for it, but, really, if this is the only gripe to raise it is not much of one at all.

Ovum (Swe) "Plastic Passion" MC 2000 Troniks

Having had a minor introduction to the world via the CMI "Estheticks of Cruelty" compilation, Ovum came across as one of the quieter groups with a track of subdued machine-like drones. While the said compilation track was reasonably one-dimensional, this tape shows the same slow drone aesthetic, yet with more movement and spaciousness explored. Two long untitled tracks are presented (one per tape side) exploring cold barren soundscapes. On the first side drones placed on a number of bass and sub bass levels resonate thick sonic waves with other mid ranged glacial shimmering sounds rhythmically rising and falling in volume. With freezing crystalline beauty, this likewise has a sterile clinical feel devoid of human emotion or interaction (the thought patterns of a cold, unfeeling mind perhaps?). Still at a snail's pace, track two increases dynamics somewhat by introducing sound elements at a quicker rate. Again the sounds sit between deep drones and rising/falling glacial mid ranged textures however a few more cavernous element creates a sense of depth that was not evident on track 1 (due to its emphasis on breadth of sound). A high pitched sound or two weave into the composition, without being obtrusive to the ear likewise mixed with what sounds like a distant slow grinding melody muffled somewhere in the background. The tense dynamic, and cold liquidous movement of this makes it more engaging than the first, fusing some more low end machine like tones and static towards then end. Probably a little too active to fit into the 'isolationist' mould, this is cold barren dark ambience perhaps slightly reminiscent of Hazard on the 'North' CD. A good release that unfortunately for me won't get played that often due to the format (me never having been much of a tape buff).

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Ovum (Swe) "Epepe" CD 2000 Fever Pitch

Despite being marked as an EP and containing only 4 tracks, this Ovum release still has a running time of over 40 minutes. Continuing on from the review of Ovum's sound above, it seems that these recordings predate the tape tracks having been recorded in around 1998-99. The first track, 'Bolesc', takes a very 'Thomas Koner' type take on slow glacial minimalism of shifting sub bass textures. Slow and steady, this track introduces the album, intensity rising at such a slow rate you barely notice the volume has increased from the opening passage to its conclusion at over 9 minutes. From the very start the second track, 'Islossning', takes a more active role of mid-ranged stormy drones, bleak gray enveloped textures and fractured machinery type sounds - part minimalist, part subdued noise, overall to great effect. Glacial archaic depths and shifting deep space bleakness (à la Lustmord on the "Black stars" album), the title track is a great sparsely textured dark ambient number that weaves its way into your psyche over its (nearly) 10 minute span. All I can add is that I can never seem to get enough of this sound when it is pulled off with such flair! The final track, 'Cenote' bass-rumbles its way into contention, more singular in focus and likewise muffled in its suffocation of a partly composed melody. The minor shifts occur here and there (likewise with slowly increasing intensity) mark a track content in slowly unravelling itself over 16 minutes. Of the four tracks of minimalist dark ambience presented, each takes an individual sound and focus creating a well-thought out and presented document of bleak atmospherics. Ovum are certainly a group worth checking out, and with myself now having some of the group's material on CD will certainly ensure regular rotations.

Pain Station (USA) "Cold" CD 1999 COP

Cold is the third release by Scott Sturgis' Pain Station; he also helms the distorted rhythmic maelstrom that is Converter. Where the previous release, Disjointed, veered into regions of the mind tinged with bleak futuristic nuances, Cold tears off the layers of (already lean) sonic excess, presenting a blinding, bone-white melding of a psyche in disrepair, hinged to existence by futility and despair. The sound is one of isolated machinery murmur and corrosive synths augmented with spastic beats amidst a taut electro industrial framework. The dry ice vocals and introspective lyrical focus concisely align the listener with Cold's exploration of the struggle within ('One mans journey into self-destruction...'). The bass of 'Dead Inside' thumps solemnly (reminiscent of Ennio Morricone's crisp, glacial soundtrack to John Carpenter's The Thing) before frustration pours from the synth line and vocals stumble down the staircase of inner turmoil. 'Turning Point' opens with machinery whispers and a despondent soundscape loop (is that Heid?) upon which mysterious beasts chirp, bleat, and scramble, and layers of subtly percussive rhythms vie for transient supremacy. 'Braindead' slinks through the computer-banks refuge, stuttering beats punctuated by the parched, sun-blasted vocals of one desperately holding on to one's already fractured sanity. Like a vacuum, the chorus of 'Aftermath' sucks the listener deeper into the swiftly disintegrating psyche. 'Dark Day (Self-Destruct)' sprays liquid radiation upon the scoured cranium, a scathing noise fusion of nuclear waste and mental deterioration. The whole disc feels as though it was, literally, recorded from within the mind of the tormented narrator. An illuminating blend of electro industrial idiosyncrasies and dark soundscape dynamics. Highly recommended! —JC Smith

P.A.L (Ger) "Release" CD 2000 Ant-Zen

This, P.A.L's third CD, is my first introduction to this group; yet I have the feeling that this may be the most commercially accessible 'release' given previous tracks, synthesiser lines and programmed sound textures, done in a way that is reasonably straightforward, gradually morphing through various segments of each. After a short layered synth/answering machine message intro, 'Discoroad' roars into existence in the guise of a driving bass sonic piece with an overload of mechanically driven beats and minimalist melody. The following track, 'Crash the Party', continues with a similar driving feel of bass sonics that, with slightly less emphasis on the beats, opts instead for a heavy focus on the programming side of things. A much harder edged beats-and-machine driven rhythmic clatter is found on the appropriately entitled "Death is a Drum Machine", heading towards the territory inhabited by label mates Converter and Imminent (Starvation). 'Welcome to Annexia' is a more personal track, containing a slow minimalist dirge of programming with hints of buried beats, sub-bass melody and scattered noise. Amping up the mood again, 'Bang your Box' is an absolute stomper of a track which has a hell of a groove to the driving bass current, complete with harsh (straight up) percussion, resulting in it being one of the definite highlights of the CD. 'In the Now' has a weird (repeated) cigarette dialogue vocal sample layered over a reasonably dark, brooding piece (with limited slow beats), providing a bit of down time between the faster tracks (which incidentally is the next track, 'Move!') This piece creates a good suspenseful atmosphere via the gradually layering programming, increasing the intensity before the full beat/noise programming kicks in. 'Reborn' mixes up the sound palate considerably, containing a massive surging (down tuned) guitar riff alongside mid tempo pounding beats and programming being refreshing in its simplicity. 'Leeste, Night' is the lengthy closer to the disc, commencing with sampled angelic vocals later moving into a darkish synth line, continuing over a 7 minute span until the conclusion - acting as a coming-down track considering the over-the-top energy displayed on the majority of the 51 minute disc. One last comment would be that there is the element of humour evident in the music, given the use of vocal samples taken from cartoons and episodes of Faulty Towers, among others. While not too obtrusive, they slightly detract from the overall feel in that it for me it gives a gimmicky edge which I tend to dislike when associated with hard-edged electronic music.

Pita (Aut) "Get Out" CD 1999 Mego

This is another Mego artist that uses a laptop computer to create these eclectic takes of digitally abstract noise/sound. Despite high-end burst of static (as on track 1), the resonance is not akin to, say, Japanese noise, but has a more inherent subdued sound. Cutting from one track to the next quite sporadically, track two has an earthen depth to the low end, with the sound spectrum occasionally sweeping quickly upwards to ear piercing result. The singular highlight of the disc come with the 11-minute third track, which has taken what sounds like a 'borrowed' classical type melody/choir vocal and fed it through a harsh computer mixing programming. While the beauty of the tune is still evident, it is somehow enhanced by being juxtaposed with the thunderous driving static and glitched distortion textures. This track can't help but stand out from the others, particularly as the majority of the nine pieces are between 1 to 4 minutes in length (and only explore small snippets of sound and noise texture). On the other hand, this track has taken a single theme and toyed with it to stunning effect over quite an extended length. Track four brings a computer game sound aesthetic to its chopped framework, while track five has a thicker liquidous tone in a calm droning type piece. You would be forgiven for thinking that your CD player is malfunctioning on track seven with the way it presents itself as a digitally-fractured segment of sound. The final track again explores an extended length, timing in at around 8 minutes. As such I feel that the disc works better when the tracks are given a bit more breadth to move, as here the tonal rumbblings and mid ranged sounds are given the ability to gradually morph into different patterns without appearing to have changed drastically. I would say this disc is worth it for tracks three and nine alone.

Polar (USA) "Consistencies in Nature" CDR 2000 M.M.S

Without any bio or release info sent with this, I have next to no idea of the background of this project and, from what little I can glean from the cover, Polar appears to consist of two guys experimenting with selected traditional instruments (leaf blower, yadaki, etc) and samplers/rhythm machines. The results they come up with encompass 6 lengthy tracks, sometimes constituting mature, well-evolved, (mildly) tribal, yet mostly studio-tweaked soundscapes, whilst other segments fall somewhat short, coming across as less accurately planned or executed (maybe even improvised), particularly on 'Winged Flight on Base Zero'. The pace of play generally keeps it down to a slow crawl emphasising the evolution of the tracks and being much akin to watching hazy textures of light emitted from a slowly heating lava lamp. 'Half-Hibernation' in part uses a standard programmed beat, distinguishing it somewhat from the other pieces, but overall it probably grabbing my attention slightly less than the more experimental sections. 'Two Points Converging' pulls out the big guns in an all-out, sprawling drone-fest of bass drenched waves and sharper, more refined textures gradually spinning and weaving in a tangled audio collage. 'Falling to the Sea' heads off on a different tangent, and contains some nice death ambient vibes (yet still experimental), being mostly built on bass and distortion loops with other scraping sounds and random tribal percussion. Elements of this remind me of a more subdued and organic sounding Stone Glass Steel during the "Industrial Icon" and "Industrial Meditation" albums, and likewise this could fit nicely with some of the items coming from the Influx Communications label such as the albums from Asia Nova or Smooth Quality Excrement. Overall this is a good introductory listen, and I get the feeling that these guys could be something to watch out for. Contact: sine23@sonic.net, if interested.

PPF (Fra) "Propagande Par Le Fait" LP 2000 StateArt

First up I will say that the packaging of this would sit very nicely next to the recent Iron Justice LP, as this is also pressed into ultra heavy weight vinyl and housed in a white slip sleeve. And if we are going to make the comparison to another power electronics group, you might as well expect this to be in the same arena. Well, in actual fact this statement is only true to an extent, as PPF do have a distinctive sound of their own that cuts from (mostly) power electronics to noise ambience and noise industrial (all done fantastically I might add). The sinister drilling tones and fluttering white noise sets things in motion on the first track of the LP 'Minski's Torture Chamber', with the

arrival of the tortured flanged vocals articulating a sense of blissful anger. Squiggly mid toned layers add to the backing of 'Penis Pressure Forensics' where the vocals are the focal point and main wonder here. Shrieking and heavily treated they take the total fore of the composition, becoming even more frantic and unintelligible throughout. 'PCF' sits more in a noise ambient styling with low guttural sounds that are treated with both echoed and sweeping textures. Various segments of French spoken samples add to the subdued calamity with also a higher pitched sound akin to someone trying to obtain a signal on CB radio. 'Your not welcome' harks back to a classic power electronics sound, starting off slow with a few select layers of cyclic noise that quickly multiply and accelerate forward to urgent mid paced delivery. The vocals add a whole new dimension, which has more to do with the insane conviction of delivery and level white noise distortion added. The tension constantly building as sporadically the voice can be made out to screaming the track's title. Not breaking any new ground, but masterfully done all the same. Side B offers up three choice selections with 'Airwaves Control' being the first. More radio transmitter signalling noise is used here to good effect within a shrill/ sweeping noise industrial framework (obviously with radio voices of French origin occasionally filtering in and out of the tense noise collage). 'PPF' takes a slight diversion in that it contains a slow drum machine percussive element. Sustained keyboard tones ebb out a slight melody in amongst more shrill piecing elements, all over a backing of distant bombing and other French speech samples. The last track of the LP ('En Milieu Hostile') comes as a lengthy extended piece that starts with deep wavering textures and scattered layers of surging mid ranged sound. Further in, heavier distortion plays a bigger role along with the use of vocals that are flanged, echoed and distorted (and is quite interesting to hear power electronics vocals presented in their native tongue). By the end of the track it has degenerated into a mass of screaming vocals, feedback and the ever present underlying surging loops. All in all yet another great addition to the power electronics genre (both group and album) with this release being limited in number to 500 cuts of vitriolic vinyl.

Psychic TV (Eng) "Were you ever Bullied at School...Do you want Revenge?" DCD 1999 Cold Spring Records

Can I review this item without ever referencing the music? Lets see if I can't! A double CD set of vintage Psychic TV live gig recordings is what this is all about, the performances themselves supposedly having never been heard before (other than by those at the actual shows, I guess). Two CDs and two performances, one recorded in September 1984, the other in December 1994, and both in Germany. Psychic TV are a group whose reputation precedes them, embellished both by past associations and by the members' own individual and collective achievements, all of which has solidly embedded them in industrial folklore. God knows what I was doing when these shows were recorded (attending primary school perhaps?) but that is not really the point other than not having a great background knowledge to draw from and hence severely flawing my ability as reviewer. Basically, you are either a massive Psychic TV fan and avid collector of their outputs and will already have this (or will ultimately be obtaining this), or you may be a little like me, being far from well-acquainted with Psychic TV's sound (let alone everything they stood for), creating a bemusing situation for me to write a semi competent, let alone intelligent review of it. Thus as you may have guessed I am not even going to try, but then again any real Psychic TV fan has probably not read this far realising my ignorance in relation to all things Psychic. Fourteen tracks in all are included (7 per performance/per disc) encompassing different song sets for both shows, including: 'Turn the Golden Thread', 'Rope your Self', 'Ov Power', 'Soul Eater', 'Godstar (Never Forget)' and 'Papal Breakdance'. Well what else to say that this may just be the longest non-music descriptive review I have ever done!

Psychonaut (USA) "The Witches' Sabbath" CD 2000 Athanor

I guess there is ritual inspired type music and then there is music encompassing actual ritualistic rites. This would most definitely be placed in the latter category, and while it is noted to be specifically influenced by Austin Osman Spare, the lyrics of one track ('Hymn to Pan') were penned by Aleister Crowley. If you were not already aware, this is a project of one Michael Ford (the main member) who has worked previously with projects such as Valefor (among others). Constant ritual percussive elements, vocals of both gender (female vocals are most prominent, either sung or spoken) and wind instruments over sparse sweeping electronic textures gives the aura of rites and evocations in full progress. Each track sets out to capture an aura, then enhances it via general repetition and minimal progression. The lack of percussion on track like 'Bacchanal' actually enhances the seductively sinister electronic drones and accompanying pan flute. 'Lights Black Majesty' presents a similar non-percussive sound, yet with additional electronic clatter and quite prominent male vocals reciting the lyrics to a Rosaleen Norton piece. It is for all the specific ritual connotations that the album does not really work as an active listening tool, but works better when listened to in a background sound context, or even as an enhancement to your own ritual practices. The cover is quite stunning, containing panels of artwork from notables such as Rosaleen Norton, Aleister Crowley and Austin Osman Spare, likewise with a transparent over wrap. Overall, I am generally at a loss for words with this one (that is quite unlike me actually...).

Puissance (Swe) "War On" CD 1999 Fluttering Dragon

Ah yes, Puissance are back at it with a remix CD of some of their favourite tracks along with two new numbers presented in a simplistic digipack case. Culling two tracks from all three albums each have some sort of discernible difference in sound, mostly that they have been made more bombastic overall or that the vocals have changed slightly in presentation - meaning that I get the feeling that some of the tracks may have been actually re-recorded. Taken from the first album, 'Control' opens this disc with a less muddled sound, massive harsher drumming and more spiteful vocals. 'Erlangen' (the first of two new tracks) starts with a sound very much like the orchestral tracks of the first CD, which initially had me worried that Puissance's sound might be regressing. This concern abates after the whole track has been taken in, as it shows that Puissance have started to write longer tracks that meander through a number of segments rather than focussing on one or two themes. The opening segment contains deep horns, shrill strings and marching percussion with one or two off kilter breaks before being stripped back to a quieter foreboding middle sections of tense ambience. Somewhat relaxed epic orchestral tones return as the third passage strides confidently back into the opening segment to bring the track full circle (although for some reason ending abruptly at mid-passage). 'Totalitarian Hearts' has had a reworking where the mastering has increased the intensity of the music and with the vocals being re-recording with a slight echo effect and a touch more irony or cynicism in the tone of the voice. 'For the Days of Pestilence', the second new track, mixes orchestral strains very well with a more primitive industrial clanging undertone, containing a steady mid paced beat, sweeping background choirs and mechanical rhythms. Although containing the same overall sound as the original, this version of 'Burn the Earth' is still almost unrecognisable when compared back to the original. It is surprising how weak the original recording was with many of the orchestral layers getting lost in a definitely mediocre production. The reworked version is thankfully much more crystalline, giving each layer of sound room to move and to embellish the track overall improving it tenfold (even if it is still a tad synthetic). 'In Shining Armour', selected as one of the most powerful tracks of the last CD, has its main touch-up in the vocal department (being re-recorded) utilising a much more forceful half sung/half spoken guise which takes a very central role over and above the massive folk tinged backing. 'Light of a Dead Sun' (also off the last CD) seems for the most part to be the same except for the obvious perks that a good re-mastering provides. I must say that 'Command and Conquer' was always a powerful track, but the manner in which this re-working portrays it all out anger is truly impressive. This is one of the most outwardly militant tracks Puissance have written, scrapping any hint of epic orchestra elements by opting for a sinister drone and mechanical pulse that rips into a massive whirlpool of distorted fast kettle drumming. Falling back to the sinister drones, mechanical textures and sounds of distant explosions, the track again ravages the listener's ears with the distorted drumming being even more powerful the second time around. I will say that with this track it is the first time that Puissance have struck me as much as some of Turbund Sturmwerk's compositions have done in the past - and that is certainly no mean feat. Given I guess this a bridging release before the new album, I am quite intrigued with what it will contain as this is too short at only 40 minutes.

Raison d'être (Swe) "The Empty Hollow Unfolds" CD 2000 Cold Meat Industries

Since this highly anticipated release appeared in my letterbox, I have been settling (or is that unsettling??) into this new offering from Raison d'être. On first listen and making a comparison to previous works, there is a more meandering song framework than the 'In Silence...' CD, hearkening more back to tracks on 'Within the depths...' CD. The song structure of this new album is essentially somewhere in the middle of these albums, though overall this is the DARKEST thing excoriated by Raison d'être yet. The drones are increasingly suffocating and keyboard passages even more solemn than ever before, intermixed with a fair whack of abrasive factory clatter, tonal outbursts and scrapping textures (with the odd monk or choir sample arising in between). An icy wind blowing through 'The Slow Ascent' stimulates metallic wind chimes within the framework of guttural atmospheric depth, while craggy outcrops of sub bass textures mar the journey, all the while with lamenting choirs mourning the fate of the traveller in his desperate search for the unnamed but ultimately desolate place. Lethargic orchestral movements embody the depressive melody of 'The Hidden Hallows', only made all the more dark via the shifting catacomb textures. Of the more abrasive and unsettling tracks, 'End of a Cycle' is the one to name, indeed marking the end of Raison d'être as a sweet/sorrowful group, here totally embracing and immersing the project in pure darkness, the invasively loud choir sounds making a commanding presence rather than depressive one. 'The Wasteland' is simply that - a sparse soundscape of tonal depth and dungeon atmospherics mainly evoked by the metal-on-metal abrasiveness. Female type choir melodies smooth the edges somewhat, yet the overall feel remains that of a place of an inhospitable bleakness. The journey reached at 'The Eternal Return and the Infinity Horizon' takes the longest span of the album, fleshing out over 20 minutes. Early Lustmord is brought to mind within the starting blocks segment, slowly introducing more doom laden sounds, sparse metallic clatter and layers of resonating male choir sounds. More comforting in non movement, the place which was being sought had finally been reached, marking also the end of another journey. Although I have made mention of the louder textures being introduced, it must be said that even with the more abrasive Stratvm Terror like samples, they are never so harsh as to detract from the typical aura for which Raison d'être is renowned and revered (likewise, it is nothing like sitting through the 'Pain Implantations' CD!!) I'm hard pressed to rank this against Raison d'être's previous albums as I tend to find that whichever is playing at the time is my favourite, with this being no exception. All that can be ultimately evidenced from this is that there is still plenty of territory for Raison d'être to explore, and I for one will be waiting patiently for the next chance to be led down into another catacomb within the depth of Peter's psyche.

Remanence (USA) "Apparitions" CD 1999 Cold Spring Records

From the brilliant packaging (sepia toned booklet with transparent over wrap) to the compositional tunes (premier neo-classics) everything here is top notch. The music spans 13 tracks of stunning, emotive beauty, which appear to take vision and inspiration from ghosts and afterlife phenomenon, rather than being produced under a militant guise of many other artists in this genre. Parallels could be drawn to some of Shinjuku Thief's albums, or perhaps the works of Ontario Blue or Ildfrost. Orchestral passages, piano interludes, and classical percussion are just some of the elements to be found. In regard to specific tracks, '1st Wave' appears to have captured the depressive pulse of time in its core essence - a sweeping of classically inspired keyboard layers, clarinet and partly tribal (treated) beat, all perfectly understated. 'Be careful what you wish for' is not as sinister as the title would imply, and features a slow piano melody with the accompanying background sound of a rainstorm (however, the title is obviously referencing crackly vocal sample asking "...is there anyone on the air?"). 'Where the Shadows Lie' sees the adoption of a militant guise containing striking percussion and both shrill and brooding string/brass accompaniment (although is probably the track where the synthetic elements are most recognisable). With combinations of instrumentation ranging from the real to the synthesized, overall it assists in the sound having an authentic vibe rather than if the whole album was keyboard generated. The flow of the album is likewise quite stunning, navigating slow depressive (almost dark ambient) pieces to more mid-paced neo-classical percussive works, meaning that there is never danger of this album being one dimensional or derivative. Additionally, when selected segments are repeated throughout the album, they appear to be echoing fragments of time and emotion (such as with '1st Wave' being repeated as '3rd Wave', but now resplendent with acoustic guitar). Not much else to say but search this out.

Reynolds (Arg) "10000 Chicken Symphony" 7" EP 2000 Drone Records

Of all the sound sources one could choose, Reynolds have surely opted for one of the more obscure, directly related to the EP's title. Side A contains a muffled mix of thunderstorm tones, distant sounds and deep textures, which are actually quite ambient and relaxing in their droning qualities. Elements multiply and sounds increase in volume, yet the ambience remains throughout. Selected noises seem to point to the sound source, yet are not such that they are totally recognizable. Side 2 is much noisier, reflecting relatively untreated samples of the sound source. The high-pitched chirping of thousands of birds is presented in a cacophony of high end texture that borders on white static. This track is quite a difficult piece to sit through, yet works surprisingly better than one would expect considering the source from which it was created. Given the intensity of the middle of the piece, it has me wondering if I would have identified the sound source if not already aware of it. An interestingly diverse release over only two tracks.

Sanctum (Swe) "New York City Bluster: Live at CBGB's" CD 2000 Cold Meat Industry

Being around four years since the release of the debut Sanctum album, I guess this acts as a bridging live release, showcasing old and new material of Sanctum (and other affiliated projects) before the imminent second album. Essentially, in 1999 the two male members travelled to the US 999 (leaving the two female members behind) to undertake a short string of dates, culminating in the New York performance that forms this recording. A fair extra heft of weight and grunt is evident in lieu of the female balance of the group, encompassing the exploration of grinding industrial elements and very Sanctum-esque neo-classical segments. The first two tracks, 'Axiom' and 'Mindtwister' (both noted as being fragments of what to expect on the next album), range in this format, arcing between the harsh and the beautiful, the grating and the sublime. The live rendition of 'Decay' is simply stunning, with vocals being even more feverous when set against the sampled industrial buzz saw guitar riff, all sheathed in soothing keyboard textures. An excerpt of a Parca Pace track (Parca Pace being a side project) encompasses track 4, slowing things down into a tribal/industrial soundscape, later exploring harsher vocals, heavier percussion and random noise textures before finally reducing to a mid-paced, slightly urgent neo-classical ending section. The sheer beauty of 'In Two Minds', while lacking the lush female vocals, simply cannot be held back when executed in such a perfect fashion. In my mind this track forms the core of everything Sanctum embody - the perfect blend of the industrial and the classical. If Sanctum were ever 'in two minds' of what direction to pursue, this would be it! 'Sly Dog' is a track of another side project 'Mago', being much more focussed on complexities and subtleties of percussion and rhythms than actual tune composition. Backing this is a track of polar opposites ('Gift'), being a quite playful neo-classical piece of multi-layered strings and, although not specifically a Sanctum piece (noted as originally being composed for a dance performance), it fits well within the morphing sound and direction of the live performance. Despite the mixed nature of the original source of the tracks (coming from the main project and other side projects), there is never any doubt that the resulting whole has Sanctum's trademark stamp all over it. As with the debut, this release illustrates that Sanctum are one of the more accessible groups of the CMI roster and will surely leave fans both within and outside of the ambient/industrial/neo-classical 'inner-sanctum' waiting with bated breath for the next offering.

Scorn (UK) "Imaginarium Award" CDEP 2000 Hymen

Having not extensively followed Mick Harris's output under a multitude of project names and styles (apart from a couple of 'Lull' items), I do not have a wealth of background knowledge to draw from, however Scorn is a name I have been aware of, and now can relate to some of the hype. It seems this project has been recording for some 9 years now in the search and creation of darkly menacing drum and bass music (this is something like the fifteenth Scorn release). Opening with 'Out of the Picture', this could be better characterized by drum and noise than drum and bass. The combination of kick, snare and high hat are certainly there, yet there is no real groove or tune to the pulverizing textures or the more subdued background noises. Big (slightly tweaked) slow pounding beats and deep sweeping tones comprise 'Worried' as it grooves forward navigating a few minor interludes from the main theme along the way. The straight upbeat rigidity of 'As If' gives it a brooding, hip hop feel, interspersed with sporadic keyboard note hits and ominous grinding bass. Twisted and morphed beat structures of 'As If (Part 2)' never quite solidify into a full composed piece (which is obviously intentional), choosing to remain an experimental exploration of tone and structure. The final track is the most upbeat and playful, with huge repetitive bass lines, grinding noise rhythms, mid paced kick drum and quick paced high hat. Sitting comfortably above this are quite atmospheric yet abrasive elements, further stretching the boundaries of the composition. A distant sinister and hazy tune also plays its role, creating a down vibe to the otherwise up-tempo fair. With all elements working perfectly, this is easily my favourite off this release. Although having become acquainted with this project somewhat late (okay, extremely late), I found this to be a great introduction to Scorn given it is an easily digested 5 track EP. Soon to follow is a full length under the name "No Joke Movement" on the same label.

Simvlacrvm (Slo) "Zeugma" CD1999 Old Europa Cafe

A hum emanates from my speakers, rising from an undefined horizon, one measured in time as well as distance. The past melds with the present as desolate, tribal rhythms mesh with occasional blasts of shredded machinery noise, a female vocal utilized as an instrument (no definable language is spoken, it is just another layer in the tapestry of sound), and sparse synths shrouded in melancholia. Simvlacrvm's (side-project of the noisy Einleitungszeit) unique juxtaposition of sonic elements, a combination of diverse sounds that transcends the ages, is most captivating. Zeugma contains six tracks listed as I-VI (track VI indicates two halves, 0 & I), all of which follow along similar thematic lines. 'II' opens with brooding drones upon which a kick and stomp belch of noise grows quite ferocious. In the distance, distorted radio-wave vocals (voices defying the laws of time, in essence, crossing the known parameters of time?) are plucked from the empty skies. As the track unfolds, pensive synths and the ever-present tribal rhythms, along with the same female vocals from the previous track, are blended into the mix. I am in awe of the way the disparate textures meld into a cohesive piece, a dark, fiery, forlorn trek. Each track seems a part of what came before, while expanding and metamorphosing the Zeugma sonic landscape, building and shifting the perceptions in fascinating ways. Synths that casually slip one into a state of disorientation open 'III', before tribal rhythms lead one into a realm of shattered hope distinguished by an acoustic guitar (or, most probably, a synth masked as one). The synths of 'VI' solemnly whisper amidst an ambience coated in subtly grim trepidation, before a light rain of percussion and raw bleats of noise corrode the background. The second half of the track eerily resonates with exhaling synths, nervous crystals of sound, a looped, fuzzy pulsation, more synths dredged from the depths of hopelessness, and chiming percussion that skitters about before everything, somehow, comes full circle (though from an alternate trajectory...). The vocals are similar, but not the same; the feel is similar-as throughout-but not the same... A wonderfully enchanting, darkly illusive, listening experience. —JC Smith

Shining Vril (UK/Aus)/ Knifeladder (UK/Aus) "Self Titled" split CD 2000 CAPP

Here we have a split CD of two of John Murphy's current musical projects. First up is Shining Vril, with four tracks of partly rhythmic yet fully tensile atmospheric soundscapes that generate an unusual ambience with the use of an Australian accented female voice on one of the tracks. 'Tortured Willow' (the first track) is a captivating piece of shrill high and low end loops that create a foreboding and suspenseful sound texture. The same atmosphere carries through to 'Carcass Black', but there is an increased reliance on treated and looped vocalisations and far off percussive drumming. The female spoken vocals are used with grim abandon on 'Dislocation', ranging from looped words, whispered and spoken passages that are vaguely treated with echoes, and other treatments to make up the basis of the track. The last track from Shining Vril is 'All my Sins Remembered', which is quite a sweepingly atmospheric piece of male vocals, sound loops and ritual sounds that still retains the underlying tension. Next up is Knifeladder with three tracks that in comparison opt for heavy percussive power electronics with the compositions partially resembling the soundscapes of Militia (albeit with more aggressive and straightforward percussive elements). 'Lasp Gasp', the first taster of Knifeladder, contains slow ritual/martial percussion, plodding bass and a slightly melodic backing soundscape/tune that gradually morphs into much heavier territory as all its musical elements become more aggression. Hitting a point late in the track, it quickly surges off at a rapid pace of increased tempo with fast drumming and noisier backing layers of sound. The next offering, the live track 'Dervish', redefines the meaning of driving percussion, and I simply can't begin to describe the inherent power of the all-out percussive/noise looped soundscape. At over 6 minutes there is no let up whatsoever to the drumming that complements perfectly the mounting intensity of the noise loops and sound stabs. The last track for both the CD and Knifeladder is the lengthy 19-minute 'Maelstrom I+II+III', which meanders through various stages along its travels. Beginning with a slow percussion and bass tune, the layered electronics remain subdued in the background whilst gradually becoming more focussed and prominent over time. The middle section sees the percussion and bass drop off somewhat replaced with a centre of noise loops, sound bites and grinding electronics, with the final segments moving back to bass and percussion driven atmospheres enhanced with the tense electronic backing. Of the two projects I would have to say I am much more enamored with Knifeladder, although Shining Vril has more than a few great moments. I guess I am a sucker for percussive driven power electronics at the moment, and Knifeladder is a name I'm sure we are going to hear quite a lot more of in the future.

Simply Dead's (Swe) "Structure of Minds" CD 2000 Fluttering Dragon Records

When I opened the package from the label containing this album, I had no idea who this group was (and I still don't), and the cover gave no hint at all to the style of the music. From the first listen I can say that I was literally blown away, as the music was able to stand on its own without suffering from any preconceived notions. The opening track, a darkly brooding trip-hop piece, resplendent with computer vocals (later mirrored with female vocals), absolutely floored me and is quite comparable to the darker sounds of a group like Massive Attack. From there, the album toys with similar sounds whilst tangentially off into more experimental, programmed type synth soundscapes (also with vocal samples, voices, etc.). The classical synth lines and reverberating bass tune of track three mirrors the emotive elements of the opening track, and continues with track four being intermixed with spoken samples from Martin Luther King and covering other topics such as Jonestown. The depth and sparsity of the tune on track 7 melds composed and minimalist elements to an emotive result, morphing back into much more heavily programmed territory with the beats and multi-layered programmed elements of track 8 (which unfortunately goes so far with the programmed sound that it detracts from the preceding aura evoked). A groovy, laid-back beat section of programming arrives on track 9, solidifying all that is great on this album, while the next piece enhances the darker, less beat-oriented programmed segments of the album. The diversity of material coming from Fluttering Dragon has thus far been very impressive, and if they continue on this path will continue to garner a positive reputation. I for one hope they can bring forward more material from this group, and here's hoping that something will eventuate soon given that this album was recorded in 1998/1999. It is worth the time to seek this one out. (Note: as I recently learned, it seems that the group includes one member who is the live vocalist for In Slaughter Natives.)

Skrol (Cze) "Heretical Antiphony" CD 1999 Membrum Debile Propaganda

This debut CD for this Czech group showcases a very classically influenced, war-mongering dark industrial group, potentially comparable to In Slaughter Natives and the like, with the rigid beat programming and more flowing and shrill string and organ segments. 'Agog' is a particularly forceful track, with violent strings, organ keys and harsh programmed rhythms with underlying martial implications due to the synthetic snare rolls. 'Litany' is the most drawn-out track at over 6 minutes, and contains a heavy focus on the monotonous organ dirge, part operatic female vocals, more shrill violins and distant explosions in the background. The cinematic battle scenes evoked on 'Non-Organic' are extremely rousing with fast beats, multi layered strings, deep horns and partly buried monotone (male) vocals. Things are mixed up a bit more on 'Fire Scene' with slow drum rolls and piano again with the organ and commanding female vocals. Although I have not had a chance to check, this tracks sounds suspiciously like a re-worked song from the 'Matyria' vinyl 10'. 'Converted' uses a basic construction of female vocals and programmed string segments in a mid-paced fashion before again adding the snare and organ, with Martina Sweeney all the while stating themes of "a new life". The final cut, 'Epilogue: Exsanguis', is the most flowing piece and

somehow manages to sound removed from the preceding tracks due to its slow triumphant air (also due to the reduced emphasis on the organ) signalling the end of battle (but not the war...). Overall this is the quality of release hinted at on the preceding "Matryia 10", and although the overall feel is probably still a little rigid for my personal liking (due to the programming basis), it is still a commendable item packaged in a simple yet well-presented predominantly black digipack.

Skrol (Cze) "What the Eye have Seen Have not Seen" Video 1999 Ars Morta Universum

This live video was released by the same mob who produced the Einleitungszeit video (also reviewed in these pages), and they have again come up with commendable results. Here the footage for this production is more professional than the first video, taking on a number of different camera shots and angles that have been collated and melded in post production. It also seems that the footage was shot across a number of different live performances and then spliced together to create this live document. As for the performance side of things, it would appear that Vladimir Hirsch handles the synthesizer and sequencer elements (basically the music side of things - and additionally with some backing vocals), while Martina Sweeney fronts the project by presenting commanding vocals and occasional percussion and synth work. The apocalyptic industrial/neo classical/heavy orchestral hymns have as much power in the live arena as in a studio format, and with the tracks presented it sees a number lifted from their 10" EP and CD, along with other live tracks (though I'm not sure where they originate). Among these unfamiliar tracks I suspect there may be some newer compositions, for they are more complex, epically dramatic and free-flowing than the material showcased on earlier releases. With the live performance sounding similar close to their studio output, I wonder how 'live' these tracks really are (i.e., as with Der Blutharsch playing to backing tapes presenting live vocals and percussion); but either way the rigid incessant power of the tracks shines even brighter with the aggressive vocal presentation and stage persona of Martina (Vladimir is less active, and situated off to the side of the stage). Another element to the post production is that the majority of footage does not play out in real time, but is rather slowed and slightly blurred with random nondescript images filtering through. The stage lighting also adds to the effect, with the artists bathed in a heavy luminescent glow along with video footage projected behind the stage against the wall. At just over 40 minutes (8 tracks in total), the music is presented in clear stereo sound, complemented with decent filming and post production, creating a good quality video release. Now I hear an upcoming item from this production crew includes a live video of Schloss Tegal that I will certainly be keeping a keen eye out for!

Sol Invictus (Eng) "Trieste" CD 2000 Tursa (via World Serpent Distribution)

Rather than a new album, this is a live recording of the group from an acoustic performance in Italy during November 1999. Assisted by both Sally Doherty and Matt Howden, the morose sung/spoken vocals of Tony Wakeford are embellished by acoustic guitars, violin, flute and the voice of Doherty often echoing or following the main vocal lines in sweet feminine divinity. This format encompasses much of this 17-song, 60-minute set, never lacking or being overstated in instrumentation, stepping between quieter subtle renditions to more forcefully played numbers (yet still retaining a fragility through the acoustic format). The renditions of 'Come the Morning' and 'In a Garden Green' are particularly great, as is the whole performance. 'Remember and Forget' has the soaring vocals of Doherty operatically phrasing Latin, with light acoustic guitar and violin guitar being the only accompaniment. Other tracks in the set list include 'Amongst the Ruins', 'Media', 'See how we Fall', 'Against the Modern World', and 'In Europa'. The high production quality of this disc makes one almost forget that it is a live recording, yet in between the songs there is polite and enthusiastic applause. The sound of the crowd has me slightly bemused seeming as if Sol Invictus were playing to the appreciative audience of a concert hall gathering, rather than that of a normal show. If this was actually the case, maybe there is a level of cultural interest by the arts crowd in Italy in such music that is not prevalent in other countries (where they tend to snub such folk noir music). Regardless, this is a great document of the live performance.

Spear (Pol) "Not Two" 7" EP 1999 Drone Records

Ritual chimes and deep ambience start the title track - a tense atmosphere of sweepings archaic sounds of aeons past. Half composed melodies abound, combined with sparse vocal chants and condemning sounds that remind me of some of the less composed works of Raison d'être. Quite a good introduction. The first of two tracks on Side B, 'The Names - Low Frequency Silence', does a good job of giving a brief description of the sound. Less forceful, here the atmospheres are of introspection, focussing on slow movement of tone and sound in a droneage guise. The archaic atmospheres are still prevalent, and are like a much more ritualized Lustmord or akin to the works of ExoTendo. The next track, 'Equilibrium', slowly rises forth at a quicker pace than its predecessor, and soon surpasses it in volume. Tense drones, smatterings of texture and sweeping textures are mixed with other unusual sound outbursts creating a track of experimental quality that I feel is not totally related to the first two tracks. Nonetheless you should seek this out for the quality of the first two pieces.

Squaremeter (???) "14id1610s" CD 2000 Ant-Zen

This is an extremely great example of cutting edge sampling and studio trickery, creating astounding glitch-orientated soundscapes (created, manipulated, de-constructed and assembled by the artist Panacea). Taking 89% of sound samples from Ant-Zen releases, most are only fleetingly recognisable due to the scattergun approach to melding them together. Static bursts of beats, blips, bleeps and other random sounds spit and gurgle from the speakers housed and delivered in a crystalline sound production. The breadth of sound exploration ranges from scattered hyper beat-driven atmospheres to minimalist electronics, and represents a fantastic cornerstone of an emerging new genre of sound texturalisation. To even begin describing all the elements of the album, let alone individual tracks, is an absolutely fruitless task since once appropriately descriptive words solidify, the sounds of the CD have already surged off on a totally different tangent. However this is not to say that this lacks focus, for it is a very engaging listen. Not quite digital abstraction (due to the many beat-oriented samples), this is also not flowing enough to be able to be played in a club. Rather, it is more appropriately viewed as a digital canvas masterwork to be appreciated by connoisseurs of experimental digital soundworks. The packaging also deserves special mention with its minimal print, transparent cover and inlay card housed in a clear jewel case creating a very nice visual effect. Lastly, referencing the title, the CD equates to 14 tracks (14id) and an astounding 1620 samples! (1610s). To even imagine collating that many samples into a cohesive and listenable whole is an astounding feat within itself. Ant-Zen does it again!

Sleeping with the Earth (USA) "S/T" CDR 1999 SWTE

Most people in power electronics would be well aware of the varying sounds coming from different geographic regions, with the two disciplines of German and English power electronics being the most distinctive. These scenes have gone on to inspire other groups with the emergence of a hybrid of these two sounds with a number of American artists. Taking a select amount of the high pitched un-structured mayhem of Con-Dom and the Grey Wolves and the obliterated semi-structures of Genocide Organ and Anzenzephalia would end up somewhere in the vicinity of Sleeping with the Earth, particularly as show cased on the track 'Inside/Beyond'. On this track rather than opting for an audible or partly audible vocal component, they are simply heavily processed into yet another squealing layer of feedback. 'And Sell my Soul' is content in presenting a few spacious loops that multiply into a subdued throbbing mass, later with churning vocals and spits, hisses and crackles of speaker obliterating tones. The surging mass of 'Untitled 2' is quite chaotic with a layer or two of squiggly, improvised sounding layers, which become less obtrusive when overshadowed by the sweeping noise elements. Overall the tracks can be characterised by their seemingly unstructured and ferocious free-form flow, yet all the while containing a hint of looped form via the building blocks of sound layers. 'Faluire 2' is a good example of this with stabs of static white noise (both feedback and vocal) over multiple pulsating factory generated textures. 'Reduction' is the closest the group gets to sounding like Con-Dom in its absolute chaos of vocals and all-out aural warfare. Here the distortion is so extreme that even the basic structure is almost entirely obliterated. I'm not sure how widely available this CDR is, but for a demo recording it is of good quality, ensuring that the group has been signed up for a number of releases, including items on Troniks and Malignant Records.

Smooth Quality Excrement (USA) "Bird and Truck Collision" CD 2000 Influx Communications

Do not be put off by the unusual title of either the group or the CD, or even by the modest packaging, as all these elements pale in comparison to the sheer brilliance of the tension-filled atmospheric electronics on the disc. The liner notes specify that all 5 untitled tracks were the result of live improvisations by three individuals who used absolutely no sequencing. In itself this is no mean feat, and it perfectly explains the sprawling, constantly tangent-pursuing nature of the sounds. Dredging electronic drones, low flying textures, spits and bursts of static, random processed beats, storming, swirling sounds burst out of the speakers from every which way, keeping the listener on their toes by creating a situation where you are never quite sure when any of these random elements will leap out. For an unusual analogy for such unusual sounds, it is akin to being in a virtual reality kitchen, listening as the compositional layers are continuously rolled and folded, never repeating with each kneading touch (with the inevitable baking process being yet another plundered sound source). Other than the tension created throughout, the tracks are constantly on the move, with some parts being highly active and multidimensional, while others create more subdued liquidous drones - maybe, just maybe, this is what Yen Pox would sound like on bad acid trip! All in all there are too many sounds and too much ground covered to describe everything going on here, but believe me when I say that you could not go wrong by picking up a copy of this. Yes, this is a definite recommendation!

The Soil Bleeds Black (USA) "Alchemie" CD 1999 World Serpent Distribution

With this, their fourth album release (this time on a new label), the group have endeavoured to take their sound forward by the use of primarily real instrumentation, attempting to rely less on sound generated from synthetic means as show cased on previous releases. The newer components of sound mainly come in the form of acoustic guitars, dulcimer, pipes, whistles, recorders and various types of percussion, which all greatly assist in fleshing out the breadth of sound. If unfamiliar with the group, The Soil Bleeds Black is a project producing traditional medieval folk music illustrating a past aeon. Essentially the intent is not to create folk music with an updated modern sound, rather it is to create authentic medieval music. Revolving around the twin brothers, Mark and Mike Riddick, and a third member Eugenia Houston, male and female vocals intermix with acoustic guitars, synth layers, pipes and percussion on reasonably short movements. Predominantly folk-oriented in vibe, selected moments border on the neo-classical with some segments of accentuated instrumentation and in particular on "Winter Marriage". The influence of CMI recording artist Arcana can be felt on the guest appearance track 'Lapis Philosophorum', which has a darker and more majestic edge than the more celebratory folk sound of the other tracks. In most part the male vocals suit the vibe very well, but unfortunately on 'Fire of the Sacred Seal' are a little over the top in accentuation, mostly in relation to the deeper voices (and not the higher, clean sung part). The haunting feel of 'Some sweet sorrow did her heart distraine, Act 1', complete with its slow pounding drumming, hymn-like female vocals, keyboard and recorder tunes is a good ending track, presenting yet another element to expanding song writing sound to the group. At 13 tracks only over 35 minutes, this might be quite a short release but it is beautifully presented in a mini gatefold card slip sleeve.

Sublink (USA) "Dawn of Desekraton" CD 2000 CDR Live Bait Recording Foundation

While Sublink are one of the generation of American artists delving into death ambient type sonics that call to mind pioneers such as Megaptera, this release is somewhat more subdued overall. Containing six 'movements', these are coagulated into one track of just under 70 minutes and, given the length, things start slowly and continue in such a style for the majority of the album. Densely heavy and partially fractured guttural drones slowly grind in sparse cyclical fashion, giving the air of discarded machinery being cranked into action once again. Far off windy textures add to the rumbling sound palate, thus providing some variation along with faint hints of slow droning keyboard melodies and occasionally understated rhythmic clatter. There is not a great change in sound across the six movements, thus the single track format suits it

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as a drawn-out soundscape sonically illustrating hollow catacomb depths. Not a bad release by any means, this item shows that Subklinik has much more than rudimentary ability. If this is anything to go by, I shudder to think of the much stronger and powerful soundscapes they are likely to come up with in future. The packaging comes with a nice oversized DVD case.

Thee Majesty (USA/UK) "Time's Up" CD 1999 Suffering Clown

This CD by Thee Majesty (comprised of Bryin Dall and Genesis P-Orridge) works in a similar manner as the Merzbow/Genesis P-Orridge collaborative CD, "A Perfect Pain". And while the latter CD was a vehicle for the sounds of Merzbow with Genesis P-Orridge's spoken passages over it, here the CD is much more reliant on spoken vocals as the focal point while the backing sounds are much more subtle, and even non-existent in sections. (Incidentally it is also noted that some of the spoken passages were also used on the Merzbow collaborative CD). Half sung, half spoken, each word is heavily articulated in a slow drawl akin to the narrator of a children's novel, albeit one that has the ability to unnerve even an adult. All sorts of ideas are explored by Genesis on the disc, with one example being on the 29 second cryptic piece 'I.T.', with the only included vocals stating "First it was...then it knew it was....and that is it". By posing questions, presenting quirky takes on common ideas and other passages of literary weirdness, it creates an aura where ordinary perceptions are shattered and where you begin to question the construct of your own reality. But I guess this is quite understandable considering that Genesis P-Orridge has been a long-standing media provocateur. Referencing the project's other member, when Bryin's contributions do make themselves known they are mostly in the form of experimental soundscapes of low subtle sounds and shifting noise textures that act as an enhancement rather than as a prominent element, and generally seem to have the resonance of being derived from a guitar. (An exception to the non-musical rule is the classical tune contained in 'Wisdom'). Basically this CD demands your attention and requires a certain mood in order to take in the content, but during the wee hours in a darkened room, it somehow seems very appropriate. The packaging is the standard jewel case, but the cover is printed in beautiful shades of purple with a silver logo and writing.

The Sword Volcano Complex (USA) "The Sword Volcano Complex" CD 2000 Suffering Clown Inc. (via World Serpent Distribution)

Many acts write and produce 'cinematic' music, yet this CD has the feeling that you are actually hearing a movie (while lacking the visual counterpart). This perception has much to do with the use and inclusion of extensive field recordings as utilised on the track 'The Sanctum', which follows the opening piece (a beautifully sorrowful passage of orchestral violin and keyboard melodies). Footfalls, seagull cries, water lapping at the shores, distant ship horns etc intermixed with droning textures and found sounds illustrate and amplify the bleak experimental collage. The liner notes of the disc make 'Cupid Never Speaks' an intriguing track as we learn that both music and words were totally improvised and pieced together into the final track. An introductory soundscape meanders along before the musical

composition segment of slow programmed electronic beats/bass enters along with well executed clean vocals and minimalist keyboard tune. The following piece, 'Monolithic', arcs back to the field recording and sound experiment format, differing in that a spoken word piece is included. One track I feel that does not really fit within the context of the other tracks is 'Adrenalin' due to the electronic/pounding drumming and partly chanted vocals format - personally I feel this is too up-tempo in comparison to the rest of the flow of the album, and unfortunately has me leaping for the skip button. Again from my reading of the liner note it appears that a trance-like state was attained for the recording of the vocals on 'The Sperm of Metal', which manages to evoke a very ritualistic feel, backed with spare experimentalism. 'Descent into the Valley of the Kings' represents another sound sculpture containing air raid sirens, looped anger filled vocals (chanting 'ashes to ashes . . . dust to dust') slow distant horn and orchestral melodies resulting in quite a stunning piece. On the final offering, (the title track) a mantra of the repeated phrase 'when will I see you again?' loops, while a variety of words central to the philosophy of the group are slowly revealed over the course of tense backing of electronic drones and experimental beats. Combining the talents of Bruce LaFountain (is this who is pictured on the cover?) and John Murphy (with other select contributions), this debut CD (even if not viewed totally in context of music) is an evocative and introspective exploration of an inner self.

Tehom (Cro) "Theriomorphic Spirits" CD 2000 Twilight Command/ NER (via Tesco Distribution)

Although this is the second album for the project, I can't compare as I have not heard their debut. Knowing that the project was discovered and signed by Douglas P, I had the perception that this might be some apocalyptic folk/neo-classical fare, but in reality is stunning dark ambient atmospheric works much in the vein of Lustmord, Inade and Yen Pox. These tracks are atmospheres sounding if derived from barren windswept battle fields long after the conflict has ended, yet remnants of twisted and discarded implements of war are still visibly scattered across the ground. The tracks also range in length from 7 to 16 minutes, further illustrating the drawn-out nature of the compositions. In the middle of the opening piece, 'Jaldabaath', a low chant filters into the mix for a fleeting instant, before the track moves on to noisier machine-grinding textures. Ritualized percussive textures and cavernous dungeon sounds work fantastically on 'Aberth', with the main section of echoed and treated hand percussion being a particular standout. The sweeping barren soundscapes are again employed on 'The Eight Sky', the various echoed treatments launching the tense drones out into the infinite distance. Subtler deep droning sound elements are toyed with on 'The Shadow Integration', with hints of choir like textures floating somewhere off in the distance. At around the 6 minute mark a slow, crippling heavy beat arrives as a ritualistic sound element as a slow horn tune introduces itself. The remaining tracks play out in similar style, intermixing ritualistic sounds and dense echoed drones; yet the final track 'Hybris' has the most focussed orchestral sound with a prominent looped horn tune. One of the greatest tragedies of the CD is that its creator is reported to have died from a war related-illness soon after the completion of recordings (Sinisa Ourscak fought in the Balkans conflict within a Special Unit based in Dugave-Zagreb). Maybe Sinisa is now one of the spirits mentioned in the title.

Ure Thrall and the Fruitless Hand (USA) "Forbidden Fruit" CD 1999 HydrXdelusions

Given that the above collaborators form two thirds of the Smooth Quality Excrement project, this gives a certain slant on what to expect of this CD (although incidentally this was recorded and released prior to the SQE album). Descending into a vortex of subliminal yet confrontational cascading drones, the all-expansiveness of the tracks present themselves as slightly more subdued and brooding than that of SQE, and at close to 30 minutes track one sets this tone in an expanded construct of experimentation. Liquefied yet shimmering and fractured multi layered tones rendering themselves void of any recognition to the original sound source due to massive amount of pre and post production undertaken. Much as in a relay, segments arise, surge forward then interlink with the next section with the former slowly receding, creating a seamless flowing voyage, navigating a myriad of peaks and troughs in the sonic ocean. Rather than utilising mostly subliminal or minimalist drone elements, this is much more dynamic, creating a quite playful take on what some may have considered a genre that contains certain limitations. Interestingly tracks two and three are live recordings but do not distance themselves from the first in sound or tone, being just as crystalline and dynamic, one opting for a 'quick' 8 minute jaunt while the other sprawls out over 28. This is highly recommended for any 'drone' fan, and is still awash in brooding sentiment to entice fans of darker groups like Yen Pox.

... Today I'm Dead (Ita) "The Anatomy of Melancholy" CDR 1999 Slaughter Productions

Not only has this project taken a heavy overdose of the Brighter Death Now carcinogen, but the sole member has gone so far as to inject it into his bloodstream to gain inspiration via intravenous means. While plagiarism can be a huge downfall, I will say that this homage is done with enough spite and hatred that they will be forgiven for any such comparisons, with this forming an ultimate tribute to their master - Mr Karmanik. The dense carcinogenic pulsations of 'Death Passion Time' are a perfect reflection of the early to mid phase of BDN's sound (complete with distant psychotic ramblings), while later tracks see the addition of much more tortured distortion for a gritty resonance without having a clue of what is being conveyed (but with titles such as 'Young Flesh' or 'Rape Me (explicit version)' you might be thankful). On 'Satisfy your Desire' the low industrial drones are merged with other noisier and seemingly improvised layers, creating a track rife with scattered modulating distortion and incessant high pitched squeals. Whereas following on, the extreme density of 'A Cold Winter' renders it a droning, writhing mass, with vocals barely able to puncture the coagulated black ooze dripping from the speakers. Weirdness of sample choice is an understatement on the untitled track 10, containing a female sung German folk song, the only treatment being the use of slight reverb and echo...strange, strange, strange indeed.... Tympani like factory poundings, sparse drones and even sparser vocal wails still recreate some of the best minimalist tracks of BDN's "Great Death" trilogy on a track simply entitled 'All' - and, yes, there is no doubt about it, with atmospheres like this, the abyss is certainly calling.... 'I'm Alone' is a sophisticated death ambient track (if there ever was such a thing), with over-the-top electronic explosions and acerbic vocals akin to rusty razor blades dragged across cold flesh. Already covering all sorts of violent extremities, religion is hardly going to escape unscathed, with God getting a good serve of venom on 'Jesus Can't' with its obliterated (inside an oil drum) sound treatment of various religious inspired radio and text snippets. These tracks, along with the cover and enclosed text, depict an individual who is truly beyond redemption (let alone salvation), yet I imagine this is no less than exactly where he wants to be....

Triage (USA) "The Cessation Of Spoil" CD 1999 Glass Throat Recordings

Triage teams the ubiquitous Scott E. Candey (Gruntplatter, head of Crionic Mind, plus more...) with Chet W. Scott (Ruhr Hunter, head of Glass Throat Recordings) for a collection of mini soundtracks adorned in trepidation, in the tattered shroud of dismay. A tension whine rises during the opening 'Serum.' Dread is highlighted as the

contorted distortion swells to the forefront. But the tension is never released; the dread remains, an ominous shadow, even as the track simmers to conclusion. 'Donor' kicks in with samples from David Cronenberg's gloomy descent into love/obsession inspired, drug-laden, co-dependency (quite literally) melancholia, Dead Ringers (this must be Chet's favorite movie as he also sampled it on 'Euthanasia' from the excellent Ruhr Hunter...Ritual Before The Hunt CD). Subtle humming and clicking noises set the foundation for moist, grinding machinery noises. The underlying, despondent drone slips under the skin, a needle injecting discomfort. Throughout, marching feet slosh through the sodden sonic landscape. The inherent unnerving quality grows more imposing as the track progresses. This track, as with much of the CD, highlights the dark soundscape elements as opposed to the sheer noise assault, but the presence of noise is always on the periphery, occasionally slipping into full view. The oscillating, whirring tendencies of spasmodically fluttering propeller blades slices through 'Grume' as hideous noise gurgles insanely underneath. Jagged metal spikes sink serrated teeth into the brooding, noisy ambience of clutter and dissolution during 'Assume.' 'Natural Order' resonates with the repetitious cadences of an exhausted machinery loop before slivers of subtly melodic sound and distorted vocal noise intrude. The fuzzy throb of 'Genetic Drift' portends danger, a danger accentuated by the slippery, scoured feedback sounds that scamper from within the smoldering embers radiance. A diverse, exceptionally crafted and conceived piece of work; each track opens new wounds in the dark soundscape flesh, new perceptions gleaned from the glistening cavities. Masterful! —JC Smith (Reprinted by permission from Side-Line magazine: www.side-line.com)

Tripwire (Swe) "Intellavoid" CD 1999 Fluttering Dragon

With the involvement of one of the Puissance members this piece of pure brooding techno/ambience is certain to shock a few. This is not at all really what you would expect considering the infamous main project. The next question is whether this is any good, and I have to admit that it is. Although slightly lacking in the cutting-edge studio sounds that are being forged by the some of the Ant-Zen crew (Beefcake and Xingu Hill come to mind), the tracks themselves are all pretty solid. Working on two levels, there is the sweeping galactic ambience (generated from multi-layered synths lines), overlaid with the programmed drum machine beats and rhythm distortion. The title track has choir keyboard textures, with mid-paced bass pounds and energetic drum work creating a dark yet dynamic listen (which goes for much of the other 7 tracks). 'Prokain' starting as a drum and bass piece quickly snaps into quick break beats then back again, using this format throughout. Things get somewhat tribal/classical in the tune and drum sequence of 'Made Out' with the classical tunes also being used in 'Imaginary Flies', break beats and noise swirling throughout the main violin melody, likewise the partly urgent/ partly brooding choir synth lines work particularly well here. Crazy bass lines and schizoid beats are the fair for 'Thief' with a strangely cheesy (in a good way) keyboard line that appears towards the middle of the track. The track 'Tripwire' is the closest thing you will get to a Puissance number, only by virtue of the angrier bomb loaded beats and sweeping urgent neo-classical backing. More drum and bass is featured on last offering 'Scartissue' with a slow bass tune, mid to fast paced break beats and again those great (sweeping) down vibed melodies. I guess this could muster a comparison as a more energetic Atomine Elektrine (more so in relation to the first album than the second), yet this remains noisier and more complex in track construction. Overall this is a pretty good listen, but I have to admit that I originally purchased this more out of curiosity than anything else.

David Tonkin (Aus) "Semblance of Perfection" MC 2000

With a definite lack of groups within Australia focussing on the death industrial genre, David Tonkin has certainly started to change all that with this high-quality self-released tape. And while the project may not have a very sinister moniker, the compositions certainly bring to mind Megaptera, Deutsch Nepal and No Festival of Light - in other words, this is a project of great old school death industrial vibes. Hands down the opening track ('Baptism of Fire') is the best track, being in the vein of the best of what Megaptera has to offer. The multi-layered drawn out electronic drones (some guttural, some mid-ranged and one high-pitched), catatonically slow beat and well placed vocal samples (taken from 'The Candyman', if I'm not mistaken) are all processed together, as further external thunderous elements sweep into the composition. The slow movement of the track allows a variety textures to be explored through various segments, coming to a conclusion with an interesting use of a distressed Papua New Guinean tribesman's voice. The clinical electronic pulse of 'Buyer Beware' brings to mind No Festival of Light along, and employs somewhat hazy and shimmering factory type sound textures. 'Terra Coitus' is slightly aggressive, with mid-paced pulsating layers and soulless beats, that over an extended length gradually align themselves into a loose yet quirky industrial rhythm (à la Deutsch Nepal). The sunken, muffled tones of the last track on side A do justice to its title ('(Song for) Aquatic Dreamers'), giving off a subdued ambient feel, with 'Glacial Drop, River Freezing' (first on Side B) continuing in a similar vein, though using fewer murky textures to help distinguish it. More vocal samples appear on 'Take me to your Feeder' (referencing religion and passivity/violence) followed by some Tibetan monk type vocals chants reverberating in cylindrical fashion until a very crispy electronic tone bursts forth from the speakers. No Festival of Light is again brought to mind on 'Dance of the Sheeple', being totally calculated with its use of clinical drones, wavering sounds and typewriter like beat. Lastly, 'Night in ABSU' rounds out the tape with an extended length track. A horn like drone, bass drenched textures and ritualistic beat set a Lovecraftian air, the mood slightly lightened with a looped sample (sounding akin to a treated harp/ female vocal recording), entrancing the listening into a dreamlike journey. While I have thrown in a few more comparisons than normal, I have simply done so to emphasise the quality of these tracks. Many facets of the death industrial/death ambient genre are explored on the tape thus preventing any of the tracks (or the overall tape) from ever sounding one-dimensional. Given that I know these are some of the first compositions that David has recorded, with the clarity of ideas shown and skills displayed, I'm sure you will be hearing a lot more about this. If intrigued drop David a line on: daveton@start.com.au.

Turbund Stermwerk (Ger) "Weltbrand" CD 1999 Loki Foundation

Having had this CD for a couple of months now, I am still undecided about my perceptions of this album. The tracks are certainly of a high calibre, with martially enhanced orchestral/neo-classical hymns, and these features seem to work best on individual tracks rather than flowing throughout the album (as they did on the debut). Likewise as the tracks are quite a bit more straightforward, they also tend to be patchier between individual pieces. With an opener like 'Vortex' (formerly off the stunning "Natural Order" 2LP compilation set), it is easy to see where my misgivings about this album originated, because exactly where does one go after a track of such brilliance? A repetitive yet intricate acoustic string instrument (sounding more like a lute than an acoustic guitar) forms the basis of the tune, mixed with xylophone chimes, female hymn oriented vocals and an understated beat, overlaid with Charles Manson's world view presented in narrative conversational form. Sharp abrasive drum outbursts, drawn-out violin segments, distant sound textures and sampled German voices embody 'Europa', and sustain a tense atmosphere and air of anticipation that never quite comes, running straight into 'Feuerader'. Here drum textures are swapped for trench warfare sounds with razor-edged kettle drumming, as bombs fall and explode overhead. This continues with electric tension until the absolutely massively epic brass orchestral segment strides in quite unexpectedly (and I question anyone who would not get inspired by this) which is however just too damn short. 'Wellenthal' again has that weird trench warfare vibe, except that here it seems to be illustrating the emptiness of downtime between battle, where the soldier is simply waiting for the next confrontation when one is faced with the choice of killing or being killed (distant air raid sirens sound, slow tunes play out, melded with layers of nondescript sounds and tones...). I find 'Stumme Front' to be the most difficult track on the album due to its repetitive bass tune appearing very high in the mix, with the only other elements being more sampled German speeches, swirling tones and liquidous/scaping sounds. Returning to my favourite format, 'Kainmal' mixes interludes of slow pounding drumming with shrill strings and deep horns to embrace the huge epic orchestral aura (flowing through a number of segments), and the less intense (but no less commanding) 'Sonnenschild' uses a similar approach of neo-classical brilliance. Militant to the core, no hint of a tune is present on 'Allen Gewalten', rather using looped tympani/snare drumming, industrial factory noise and a single German phrase repeated throughout to drive the message home (that message is lost on a monolingual anglophone like myself). An echo treated piano and tonal elements make for a short interlude to the final track 'Arcanum', which is essentially a soundscape piece used as backing to yet another era speech (incidentally, the final hidden track is a sampled early recording of a German male singing and straight drumming piece). The blood red cover with text and imagery (in a combination of black and white print) if full of esoteric symbolism and unfortunately as the text is again exclusively in German I can't appreciate the full implications of what is written. While on the musical front this may not be exactly what I was expecting from the debut release, I think my overall uncertainty is more tainted from this angle than specifically being a below par second album. Turbund Sturmwerk have created a very solid and worthy album, it is just that it slightly differs in sound and direction from what I was expecting.

Ultra Milkmaids (Fra) "Peps" CD 2000 Duebel

This is the first I have come across this French duo, yet maybe this is for the best since the bio states that the group had previously toyed with industrial-noise-rock and jazz-noise?! Here they seem to have settled into minimalist ambient soundscapes, and do a mighty fine job of it! (Maybe their previous experimentations would not have been as bad as my expectation). Regardless, this could be filed alongside artists like Squaremeter, or alternatively some of the MEGO roster in its obvious studio manipulation and glitch aesthetic. Would 'digital abstraction' be an appropriate term? I think so.... Tones, blips, fractured static and dismembered melodies form the broad canvas of the sound textures, creating a sterile environment of electronics often enveloped in a minimalist brooding tune. The juxtaposition of silence (when utilized) emphasizes tone - and thus heightens the perception - of what would otherwise be wrongly perceived as fragile soundscapes - there is an inherent power in these recordings even if the actual volume is not overwhelming. Additionally the disc comes with a multi-media component with a video for the opening track of the disc. Much as in the description of the music, the video does a commendable job of visually illustrating the sounds with a slow panning shot of nondescript imagery, with the video production footage intentionally textured and flawed.

Ultra United (Swi) "Research 1" 7" EP 1999 Drone Records

Having heard good things about this project, I was eagerly anticipating this EP. Not only does it not disappoint, but it only makes me impatient for upcoming releases! (For a general categorization I guess you would slot this in with groups of an industrial noise, or subdued power electronics sound). The introductory piece 'Achtung!' is a mildly treated female choir vocal sample that sets the stage for the first proper track 'Execution 2'. Comprising intense noise with slow militant orchestral underpinnings (synth generated layers), the shrill swirling of mid-ranged sound amplifies throughout the progression of the slow atmospheres. Whilst I was trying to describe the last track on Side A, 'Scrape in the Sky', I noted that it has already finished before descriptive terminology had a chance to solidify in my mind... hmmm, far too short (for easy reference, check the description above!). On Side B, fire-blazing intensity is presented and detailed on 'Physical Initiation', again with a great mixture of deep orchestral sub melodies and mid-ranged noise. 'Arrival (excerpt)', on the other hand, explores shrill high-end noise of almost air raid siren proportions that overshadows the lower noise texture. Given that this is a shortened version, I would certainly like to hear the unabridged version of this track. The brooding yet tense atmosphere of the final track 'The Volunteer' (another abridged piece) applies deep orchestral layers (rather than noise) to great result, much like some of the works of Dagda Mor. Printed on gold vinyl, this is a special item you should seek out, and should likewise keep a keen eye out for a future release, which I believe will materialize via StateArt.

Ulver (Nor) "Metamorphosis" MCD 1999 Jester Records

Those who have followed Ulver's evolution will either be astounded by this release or will be unable to 'get' what the band was doing. Well I can say without a doubt I am of the former mind-set, and this mini CD is much of the reason why I tried to track down the group for an interview in this issue (note: an interview was consented to by the group but unfortunately was not returned before publication). Following on from the electronica/trip hop tinged 'Themes from William Blake's Marriage of Heaven and Hell', Ulver have severed any ties to their fledgling black metal days to come up with a banging techno/dark electronica/ambient gem. Starting out with 'Of Wolves and Vibrancy', (after a short interlude) the track strides headlong into a hefty mix of fast techno driven beats, grinding bass, computer glitchy textures, all complimented with

a dark synth underbelly. If only all techno was to sound like this.... "Gnosis" is a more brooding, drawn-out dark electronica piece that covers quite a distance over its 8 minutes. The track plays with cinematic half-composed segments, subtle acoustic guitars and slow driving rock beats before a heavy pounding (but still rock) beat and various studio trickery solidify the core of the track. Stripping back to a desolately mesmerising guitar tune, the vocals are introduced (being the only track with vocals as always handled greatly by Garm, aka Trickster G, in his trademark full throated clean singing style) followed by the re-introduction of all the former beat and computer generated elements. Again rock drums and piano introduce "Limbo Central" before becoming progressively more treated with studio manipulations, drum machines, synth lines (and the like), with the last section being played out with a segmented (almost) industrial guitar riff, tension rising into the last seconds of the three and a half minutes. Last up is 'Of Wolves and Withdrawal', and, as the title may suggest, is a direct opposite of the opening cut, opting for a greatly flowing piece of drone ambient textures and cavernous sounds, all the while remaining true to the essence of the sound production already established. As a bridging release to the upcoming CD "Perdition City", if this release is any indication it will be no less than a masterpiece.

Umbra (Pol) "Ater" CD 1999 Fluttering Dragon

While there is another US group operating under the same name, this is the Polish 'Umbra', a one-woman project by Eliza. This CD oozes a ritualistic air from the opening segments, summoned forth from the 'witch'-like whispered spoken vocals, solemn keyboard layers, distant moans and half sung wails. The slow pace of the segments of ritual drums and chimes heightens this feeling, yet when used sparsely creates a meandering musical forum. At other times small outbursts of shrill strings and heavily accentuated female poetic evocations add a nice amount of tension to the dank and dreary musical setting. Later sections contain understated classical piano and orchestral backing, ushering the listener through mournful settings to be later jolted into heightened awareness with urgent bass pounding, church bells, slow string segments and scattered tones all combined into a surreal nightmarish atmospheres. Each of the 9 tracks (at a touch over 40 minutes) interweaves with the preceding piece to create an impeccable flow even if a wide variety of ritual atmospheres and compositions are explored. Given that this is a very professional sounding release, one may draw a wide variety of (fleeting) comparisons to sections of sound from groups such as Aghast, Endvra, Desiderii Marginis, Ildfrost and the like. The packaging (particularly the cover) is well presented in a jewel case along with various panels and fold-out sections in tones of earthen reds and browns, and is complemented with gold text print with the overall visual feel being quite comparable to the 'CMI' look. Another great ritual/industrial/dark ambient CD from this rising label.

Umbra (USA) "Unclean Spirit" CD 2000 The Rectrix

Umbra is Scott E. Candey (Gruntsplatter, head of the Crionic Mind label) and Stephen B. Petrus (In Death's Throes, head of the Live Bait Recording Foundation label). They perfectly meld the Gruntsplatter Armageddon Noise Grind dynamics (a type of post-apocalyptic sonic haven built on destruction) with the In Death's Throes eerie, more darkly sinister inclinations. Oscillating, humming feedback chews through the ground bones ambience of 'The Valley Of Dry Bones,' Scott's destructive tendencies barely held at bay as the ambience is smothered in distortion. 'Tangled Gullet' weaves anxious tones into a wall of crackling, radiantly alive sound. The compelling balance showcases what the novice noise listener might miss—the inherent language of each layer, the emotional pull of each layer, as it is peeled to reveal the intricate design at the heart of the piece, hence, the inherent anxiety. Voices swim below a slow throbbing rumble of noise during 'Stacking The Dead,' the brain numb from the death work at hand. 'Spiders Under The Skin' reverberates in a more haunting, downright ghostly vein, Stephen's esoteric tendencies on display, murky and discomfiting. The speaker ripping, acid waves tumult of 'Washed Up On The Banks' prophesize cataclysmic doom, while more of that damned strangely melodic humming slinks underneath. 'Lecher' is the masterpiece, the crystallization of Umbra's sonic vision, featuring deep, growling noise, slashed and immediately cauterized. The incinerator burn distortion leads one into the molten, melting walls of the abattoir. The tonalities and density of napalm drenched sound has been compressed, allowing no escape, the dripping walls of the abattoir closing in, claustrophobic—brilliant! There's also a recontextualization of the material on Unclean Spirit by Azoikum, entitled "Husk," in which the turbulent tides so inherent in the music (an impression of turbulent electronic seas can be gleaned throughout) is brought into focus. Excellent work and reason enough to check out both of these artists' other projects. —JC Smith (Reprinted by permission from Side-Line magazine: www.side-line.com)

The Unquiet Void (USA) "Between the Twilights" CD 2000 Middle Pillar

A slight diversion is taken on this new Middle Pillar release, with an album of composed sub-orchestral dark ambience. A project of one individual, Jason Wallach, the concept revolves around the dream state with this aura permeating the sometimes dreary, sometimes uplifting surrealist-tinged atmospheres. As the primary tool, the synth gives a hint to the stylistic sounds generated, but is done in such a way (with layering and the use of tonal elements) that it generally avoids any cheesy sounding moments. Much like the music, the track titles correspond to the idea a journey into the dream state. Dark-pounding percussion and massively uplifting string elements marks 'The Dreaming Begins', detailing a mix between ambient tones and orchestral elements. 'Sinking into the Blue Black Oblivion' takes a ritual percussive framework and builds over it a darkly sweeping classical melody that ebbs and flows for the nine odd minutes. While 'Sea of Serenity' contains a more sombre underlying mood with a slow, depressively echoed tune, the sound switches to an increasingly urgent and tense atmosphere on 'Angels' (here there is a mild programmed rhythm element within the sweeping keyboard textures). With its groaning pulse and distant drones, 'Morning Twilight' marks the beginning of the end, as if the uplifting multi-layered orchestral tune is drawing the soul back into the slumbering body. Packaged in the now trademark elaborate fold out digi-pack, Middle Pillar presents another fine act in their growing roster of US artists.

Unveiled (Ger) "Silver" CD 2000 World Serpent Distribution

Being a solo project of one of the members of ...Of the Wand and the Moon, this has little in common with their acoustic folk sounds. And in what would appear to be the second CD from this group, this album focusses on electronic/ambient type soundscapes. On more than one occasion elements of the sound bring to mind the recent works of Hazard, as is displayed on 'Anotherworldness', with its grinding industrial factory textures wrapped in an experimental/electronic aesthetic. 'Soul in a Crystal' adds a mysteriously sweeping edge to the sonic palate (almost choir-like in its selected layers of sound), mixed with spoken word lyrics and some damn heavy martial/ritual type percussion. The slow grinding machinery returns on 'Winter', engulfing the listener in its bleak hazy resonance, where half-remembered melodies seem to be buried somewhere under the textural slab of sound. 'Fire as a Friend', on the other hand, is quite active, containing a mid-paced metallic rhythm mixed up with circular weaving sonics. 'Sand' comes off as easily the most composed track, with spoken vocals and commandingly heavy slow martial beats over a base of sparse sounds and slight melody, while the mid-paced programmed rhythm of 'Letter and Stones' is adequately sonically scarred to not detract from the dark and partly ritual atmosphere. The title track takes the CD to its demise via a low subtle soundscape, which is beautifully enhanced with a looped Gregorian vocal line and ultra subdued percussion (and in part brings to mind a fleeting reference to Raison d'être). Overall this could not quite be described as straightforward dark ambience, but rather as an electro/acoustic endeavour that has subsequently taken on quite a few darker characteristics. Either way, the results are very worthwhile and worth your time.

Urawa (Bel) "Villa Vertigo" CD 2000 Foton Records

With input from Olivier Moreau (aka Imminent) and John Sellekaers (aka Xingu Hill) what is presented here is very different to what I was otherwise expecting. Consisting of a series of drawn-out subtle soundscapes (with each track title referencing a room in the "Villa"), this has more in common with digitally abstract experimental works than anything like the electronica/industrial of their main projects. Ambience generated of a quite minimalist nature sees strange sounds, samples and voices used with cunning effect (such as the dripping water, ticking clocks and metallic scraping of 'The Study'). The type of sounds Hazard have been creating are brought to mind on a number of occasions, however this differs due to its playful and quirky style that is generally less cold atmospherically than the comparative project. There is a definite complexity to the subtleness of the compositions, and words do little to adequately convey my generally positive perceptions. Packaged in a slimline case in an outer card slipsleeve, insets include a real photo, business card and projector slide.

Various Artists (Rus) "Edge of the Night: Russian Gothic Compilation" CD 2000 Russian Gothic Project

If you are anything like me, normally you would run a mile from a compilation with the word 'Gothic' in the title, and though this was my first instinct the cover's blue and silver printed wood cut art initially grabbed my attention and encouraged me to explore further. After browsing through the 16 odd tracks, I tend to feel that categorising the compilation as 'gothic' actually detracts from the diversity of material on offer. While there are indeed some bands who do little more than perpetuate all of the cliched sound associated with the Gothic genre (guilty of this are: No Man's Land and Phantom Bertha) there are plenty of other groups that have a wealth of talent to offer. Canonis is an unusual ethereal band due to the incorporation of folk, progressive rock and doom touches throughout their track, as well as a sweet female voice for the vocals. Baroque-type classical music is the fare offered by Caprice, consisting of a harp introduction and orchestral chamber music and operatic female vocals that are done superbly. Not that I am totally taken by Dvar's track, I mention it just because it is quite bizarre. Mid-paced programming and synth lines are overlaid with vocal shrieking akin to what is found in extreme metal circles, except that they sound as if they recorded when under the influence of acid. Hmmm... not sure what to make of it. The synth ethereal project Dreams contains a trip hop/drum and bass type backing over soothing keyboard lines and soaring female vocals, and is quite interesting. Cyclotimia inhabit the type of sound coined by Atomine Elektrine in a new aged/classically influenced trance/techno piece. With the sheer brilliance of this track, it is quite easy to see why StateArt have signed them up for a release. What could almost be described as a perfect blend of gothic and ethereal genres, Lunophobia make a good fist of this with a melody that both rocks and soars. If pure traditional folk/medieval music is your fare (and I must have to say it is for me when done with this much conviction and authenticity), Djembe should be checked out. The use of mostly (if not entirely) real instrumentation has only assisted in the full and rich sound of the tribal beats infused with pipe/fiddle/violin melodies. A melancholic folk tune is perfectly handled by Kratong, with Douglas P-type whispered/spoken vocals, further enhanced by female backing, string quartet accompaniment and lone intricate acoustic guitar melody. Moon far Away have a brooding classical cinematic feel (yet gothic tinged sound), with their sparse composition being fleshed out over the six-and-a-half-minute mark. Of those other groups not already mentioned or described thus far, these include: Romowe Rikoito, Neutral Damsel's Dream, Tnt Art (presenting a Swans cover) and Cisfinitum. Giving a broad cross-section of the variety of the sub-cultural music originated in the heart of Russia, this is a well compiled and presented compilation that shines as a beacon for many (at this point) unknown artists.

Various Artists (Wld) "How Terrorists Kill" CD 1999 StateArt

If you do not like your sounds harsh and abrasive, or balk at the questionable inspirations that lurk behind the music, I suggest your steer clear of this! This compilation was originally slated to be issued via the Ajna Offensive, however it has now surfaced via the superb German label StateArt. The oversized 20 page cover/booklet is immaculate in collation and presentation of the artwork submissions from each artist. The sinister intent of the subdued Ex.Order track, 'The Only Way to Heaven', sets a subservive platform for the launching of later, more forceful pieces. Tense atmospheres, slow pounding factory rhythms and shrill yet bearable noises are what can be found here, beneath which lurk what appear to be voices, sirens and general crowd chaos. Slogun do what they are best known for - obliterated walls of extreme punishing noise. From memory I have never really appreciated the vocals, but here the distorted treatment and ranting dialogue work particularly well. A piece of Christian gospel-type music acts as the introduction for Thorofon's track (of which the looped bass from the song appears to sit in the background throughout the whole track) before machinegun fire ushers in the main section of tense power electronic noise tones and repeatedly ranting phrase. Next up is Valefor's track of subdued ritual industrial sound, more akin to Deutsch Nepal or No Festival of Light. Nothing fantastic, but a solid track nonetheless. Though I would have never thought that power electronics could

provide a forum to present rhyming poetry, Robert X Patriot does here to laughable effect. This is a shame considering that there is certain charm to the crude improvised noise/rhythm backing. A pretty trademark track is offered up by Con-Dom containing straightforward squealing mid-ranged noise, ranted heavily treated (and mostly indecipherable) vocals. Like Slogun, Macronympha opt for the wall-of-noise sound, yet do not choose to include vocals in what is an intense if not throwaway piece. The sinister ritual sound and pulse of TGV's track is intermixed with a variety of vocal samples, speeches and conversation snippets, creating an intense death ambient/ death industrial sound.

Having heard quite good things about Wertham, the track here does not really grab me, suffering from a muffled, muddied sound production of noise industrial implications. The collapsing and imploding ultra noise textures of ASP's 'The Order of Faith' is intense power electronics, albeit a little repetitive, and while normally hard-hitting, the Grey Wolves present a track that is uncharacteristically atmospheric without losing any inherent power (via a slow sweeping noise industrial sound). Slow and subversive, the untitled piece from Der Kampfund starts off slowly before launching into an impressive noise attack that is both shrill and grinding in sound texture, and infused with indecipherable crowd chants. Operation Cleansweep have the somewhat daunting task of concluding the compilation, yet handle this with ease via the swirling noise and the incessant grinding of the out of control factory machinery. Overall, the tracks presented are thoughtfully placed in their track listing to align noisy tracks next to quieter ones to give some respite and appreciation of diversity between pieces. Worth getting if you are a power electronics/noise industrial aficionado.

Various Artists (Wid) "Insights of the Profane" CD 2000 Ma Kahru

This compilation represents the merging of sounds from two musical scenes (black ambient and black metal) which, while sounding very different, do often have a similarity in inspirational approach. The basic layout of tracks goes something like black ambient/black metal/black ambient, creating diversity between pieces. Given the focus of this publication, I will deal mainly those groups which fit under this umbrella. Anapthergal (hailing from Finland) are a group I have not heard before, but this does not prevent them from opening the CD with deep noise/ambient atmospheres, Gregorian chants, distant groans etc thrown in for great effect. The shrill high speed riffing of Abigor (the most well known Black Metal band on offer here) has an old school thrash style to the song-writing which is actually quite different to the medieval black metal style on their first few albums. Baal are particularly good with a track of swirling sub bass textures of varying levels, gradually multiplying into a storming mid-ranged noise track. Sublink's track, which contains both low drones and muffled sweeping elements, don't really set my world on fire - it's not a bad piece, but there's just not enough tension in the sound. 'Murderous Vision' take a noisy mind frame distilling it down into a tensile atmosphere, essentially creating an impotent noise track that is all the better for it. Ontario Blue, a side project of Stephen Pennick (of Endvra infamy), present a track of pure Middle Eastern tribal flair that is the least dark and most composed of the ambient tracks (no real point in pointing out that this is a great track if you already appreciate his other solo and collaborative outputs). If I remember correctly, Darkness Enshroud were once a black metal band but have now been resurrected as a black ambient project. Slow synth layers, deathly drum machine pounds and ghostly female vocals make their evocation a reasonable but hardly fantastic track. GoatWAR deserve a special mention for their musical style alone, described as "raw black vomit war metal"! (Hmmm.. black metal is not known for its sense of humour, but this surely has to be tongue-in-cheek?). Deep subterranean dungeon atmospheres and a piano being played somewhere off in the catacombs make Veinke's track a great listen as the last main track (except otherwise for the hidden track - a blistering 1 minute 27 seconds speed riff attack from Allfather). As there has been quite a bit of crossover interest from Black Metal to industrial music over the past 5-7 years, this release would be of obvious interest to such fans; yet as I'm not sure how much crossover interest has gone the other way, I don't know how an entrenched industrial fan would take to this. Regardless this is a solid document of some of the currently lesser known groups of each genre with a suitably dark satanic imagery. Finally, of those black metal bands not prior mentioned, the compilation also includes Azaghal, Archaean Harmony, Judas Iscariot and Myrmidon.

Various Artists (Wid) "Noise Transmission CD 1999 Deafborn Records

With the clarity and ferociousness of the production, you would be hard-pressed to identify these tracks as live recordings, yet the nine tracks from four different artists were recorded at the 1998 Noise Transmission Festival held in Germany. The artists collated on here cover the power electronic and death industrial genres either exclusively or bridge the two. First up is Rectal Surgery, with a pounding mix of industrial noise, beats, scattered samples and screamed vocals. In particular the fusion of mechanized beats (bordering on gabber) and noise in 'Gefahr' is very impressive. Irikarah is a name I have not come across before, but they create a subdued noise industrial piece with 'Mistress of Agarth' before stepping into searing noise/power electronics on 'Fight Fast' (my speakers sound if they can barely withstand the punishment being dished out). The Cazzodio tracks are a little different to what I heard on their debut CD in that vocals are included as either spoken sections or death metal screeches. I don't know how convinced I am with the vocals themselves (particularly when growled), but the music is of the same high calibre of industrial-strength power rhythms (albeit a bit slower overall than normal) and hefty slabs of concrete noise. To bring the CD to a conclusion, Morder Machine (feat. Atrox Morgue) grinds things down to a death obsessed halt with two tracks, including one previously off the 'Death Show' CD. Vocals gargling razor blades over a death industrial pulse and scattered screeching mayhem envelopes the room with both 'Living Dead' and 'I'm so'. With this act the vocals are the true wonder obviously working in a cyclical fashion in feeding off and giving back to the creation of the deadly atmosphere of the obliterated slow beat and noise textures. Overall worth getting if you have an interest in any of these artists.

Various Artists (Wid) "RGB [An Audio Spectrum]" CD 2000 siRcom (via World Serpent Distribution)

As a conceptual work this is quite interesting. Three sound artists were each given a colour (red, blue or green) and asked to produce a 15-minute composition illustrating what they thought their colour sounded like. These three tracks were then compiled into one 45-minute piece (divided into three 'movements'), while two other tracks ('Black' and 'White') were created from the collective material and used to start and conclude the CD. The three sound artists involved include Leif Elggren of Sweden (red), souRce research of the UK (green) and Matmos of the USA (blue). The collective introductory track, 'Black', is an unusual one in that it uses great expanses of silence over its 10-minute length, occasionally containing fleeting tonal analogue outbursts (black=suffocating silence maybe?). On the lengthy main track, Leif Elggren is up first on Movement 1, offering his interpretation of the sound of red. Thick wavering analogue drones characterise this segment, increasing in intensity and evasiveness that to extent exudes the feeling of warmth (hence the colour red). On movement 2, souRce research are given the task of tackling the colour green, and handle it by starting with low shimmering sounds, and building it to a point where an acoustic guitar tune, whispered vocals and field recordings of seagulls are utilised. At first I was not so sure about the effectiveness of this segment, but the more I thought about it, the more it did bring to mind visions of rolling green hills along some unnamed British coastline. The shimmering sounds are again used (but now becoming more akin to an electro/acoustic soundscape) that bridges the piece towards movement 3, where Matmos tries his hand at the colour blue. From the written passage on the cover, it seems quite a formula went into the ethos behind this soundscape, which makes more sense when listening to this last segment. High-end scattered junk sounds sit over deep and watery tonal elements, basically attempting to illustrate the receding nature of the colour by using foreground textures (high end) and low drones and pulses (background). Interestingly, a mid section includes a jazz type percussion drum beat infused with the other sounds, though I'm not exactly sure what it signifies. For me this piece is the most experimental and unfortunately the least successful in its attempt to create its colour through sound, although it does appear to have had the most thought put into it. Rounding out the disc is the collective track 'White', whose subtitle 'red+green+blue=white' states the obvious insofar as elements taken from each movement intermix and interact. Overall I think this works better as an experimental and conceptual work than an album one would listen to for simple enjoyment.

Various Artists (Wid) "Saturn Gnosis" 2 x 10" Box Set 2000 Loki Foundation

Saturn Gnosis is a mesmerizing collection of surreptitious sonic atmospheres, each track depicting varied impressions of the German occult lodge, Fraternitas Saturni. But, not only is it a feast for the ears, the presentation must be noted. The face staring at me (with no discernable pupils) from the cover of this impressive package is stern, the unyielding expression draped in secrecy, in knowledge most mysterious. As Rene, head of LOKI informs me, the face is "the Gotos, a visualized medium that was based in every lodge of the brotherhood of Saturni as a stone bust. This Gotos is overlaid on the front image by a demon-painting of a Saturni member." (Interestingly enough, when looking directly at the picture, the bust is most prominent, splashed in crimson brush strokes...but look at it indirectly, from an angle, for a more sinister perception. Glance at the picture in the mirror, from a distance, and the demon within becomes more visible, gaunt and in allegiance with...demons, of course. Eerie and hauntingly effective.) Open the glossy black box and there is more delight for the eyes. Therewith enclosed, both sleeves, as well as a large booklet, are decorously designed with the brightly colored, geometrically enticing artwork of Frater Pacitus, one of the original members of the Fraternitas Saturni from the 1920's. All of this would be for naught, though, if the music were not as compelling as the packaging and subject matter. Not to worry, as one places the semi-opaque (it is oddly tinted-brown, bronze?-individual perceptions may vary) vinyl on the player and sets the needle to the groove. Inade's 'Cherub' bursts through the stratosphere, unveiling an uncanny, tension weary ambience upon which vocals with a certain arcane enunciation (the German language foreign to me) are tattooed. Further in, the Inade ship blows a horn as it crosses from one dimension to another (and neither dimension may be this dimension...). As it lurches forth, the rolling cosmic seas disintegrate into a tempestuous corkscrew of sonic trepidation and awe-inspiring discovery. In the background, a scalpel is thrust and twisted into the barren heavens. That's one track, 7:28 of explorative ambience that transcends genius. Yes, it's that good! Easily on par with the brilliant V.I.T.R.I.O.L. materiel, and worth the price of admission, as I like to say. How can anyone follow this up? Well, rest assured, what follows more than validates the proceedings. Herbst9 solidify their standing as one of the finest dark ambient practitioners with the molar grinding ambience of an unknown beast amidst tribal ruins during 'Threshold To Akasa.' The violin of Blood Axis' 'Der Gefallene Engel' sings the strings of sorrow while Stephen Flowers (author of the book Fire And Ice, in which more information on the Fraternitas Saturni can be found) speaks of "The Fallen Angel," and strange sounds gurgle underneath. First Law blends astonishingly bizarre, almost otherworldly textures (understated instrumental vocalizations, disintegrating crystals from afar) and time devouring tribalism during 'Velochrome 1.' The track surprisingly ends up in a region distinguished by medieval shadings, forging an unexpected path in the winding darkness. SRP trespass on the desolate, darkened terrain of the void, a terrain littered with symphonic sonic residue that pushes at the periphery, eventually succumbing to the insistent symphonic radiance during 'Hochpolung Des Willens.' A slumber of nebulous design is disrupted by the processional pummel and ascending, born of fire chorus that rises from the very center of a convoluted labyrinth amidst the multi-layered progression of sounds during Predominance's 'Awaken Of The Violet Demons.' The masters of ancient darkness, Endvra, decorate a dull, wind from nowhere throb with crisply plucked injections of tattered anxiety amidst threads of brittle, obscure tones woven into the glistening flesh of 'The Sun And The Stillborn Stars.' Turbund Sturmwerk entrance via a disjointed collage of discomfiting vocals and a foreboding bass, grim dynamics harbored in confusion amidst the chaos din during 'UrFyr.' Pandemonium is upon us, though it is a subdued, distinctly lethal interpretation. Saturn Gnosis brings out the best in all of the participants (literally-the First Law and Turbund Sturmwerk tracks may be their best yet, the Inade track only confirms that they are inventing music that is of a level most cannot even comprehend...). Each track envelops the listener in an ambience drawn from the well of imagination that each band drinks from. Each track also seems to have two distinct sides (at least): the visible, predominant sounds, and the taciturn sounds that suggest indecipherable allegiances. On every conceivable level, Saturn Gnosis is nothing less than a masterpiece! —JC Smith

Various Artists (Wid) "Your Daily Buzz" CD 2000 Tripeke Records

This CD is the first release on this new label with contributions by Lasse Marhaug, K2, and MSBR vs. Cartisian Faith. Lasse Marhaug is on track 1 'Surface Sci-Fi', which is a grinding mass of lurching feedback gradually becoming more chaotic and metallic as it builds up multiple layers, giving me the feeling that guitars might have been somewhere in the original sound source. Mid-way through, the first segment cuts out with a second feedback grinding loop kicking in (over a slightly watery undercarriage)

prior to the full force arrival of high-pitched squeals. While not sufficiently free-form to be pure noise, it is still a good, partly-composed noise track. On track two, 'Limb Bud', K2 subscribes more closely to the pure noise sound aesthetic with a 14-minute ear reaming piece of blasting high-end white noise. There are the odd segments of composed texture, but this is really only a small fraction of the total sound, with chaos basically reigning supreme as the piece chops and changes sound focus every few seconds. The remaining tracks (three through nine) are created by a collaboration between MSBR & Cartisian Faith, and seem to be more experimental noise, exploring sound texture and equipment effects. Vocals form about half of their first piece, 'Yon', but as they represent the sound source they have been basically mangled beyond recognition. 'Daily' is a reasonably noisy and harsh piece of mid-ranged static, but with a good sense of direction and tension-building it makes for a good listen at over eight minutes. 'Buzz' is much more typical of the noise genre with its wall-of-screaming feedback style, while the following piece, 'Grey', is almost the total opposite, with low, dredging metallic and electronic sounds akin to a more synthetic Daniel Menche. Following on, the track 'Cyclic' is quite unusual in that it seems to be generated from someone taking a bath with contact mics creating 'up close' sound effects. Another one of the longer format pieces is 'Lurid', and while consisting of extremely stormy metallic echoed scraping textures, it tends to hold its direction well even when incorporated with soulless, machine type-beat off in the background. Overall quite a good CD if you are an experimental/noise music type fanatic.

Veinke (USA) "Collection III The Black Summer" CD 2000 Triumvirate

Seven unnamed pieces are showcased covering a reasonable amount of ground in the process, but a basic description could be that this CD encompasses ultra dark sonics with bleak & searing qualities. There are segments of cavernous drone oriented soundscapes (such as on track one) while track two contains tense atmospheres of shrill textures, deep throbbing heartbeat, guttural chants and the sound of a metal implement chipping away at stone (giving the aura of some un contemplated entity valiantly trying to dig its way out of its core earth entrapment). Track three arrives with a running time at over 20 minutes, sprawling out with drone undercurrents and smatterings of factory oriented sounds (echoes, clanging metal and nondescript textures). Later things are stripped back to a distant cavernous drone with a mild percussive texture and the rambled religious chant of someone acknowledging their imminent demise. Even further in, awesome (non lyrical) vocal chants that sit alongside with a deep echoed metallic rhythm that ushers the track to its ultimate demise. The megalithic programmed percussion of track four gives it a rough power noise type vibe and while the following piece opting for a similar sound yet arriving with far less percussion and much more searing noise. Track six is unusual in that it utilises a fair amount of contact mic type derived sound, which is more akin to the sounds created by Daniel Menche that the sounds on preceding tracks (this sound continues to an extent on the final track but also contains an undercurrent of drone textures). Overall Veinke have offered up a more than commendable disc of dark sonic textures.

Vir (USA) "Strika/Solaris" 7" EP 2000 Drone Records

Having something to do with the project Love Lies Crushing (incidentally on the Projekt label), this is a sparse experimental release with mild ethereal overtones. Harmonies, swirling textures, and a spacious expanse of atmosphere is prevalent here, with sounds ranging from soothing to tensile, and female vocals shift within the mix of the first track as if articulating archetype memory (rather than simply being included there for the sake of providing vocals). Side B offers up an even more expansive vision of multi-textural drones, shimmering guitar-generated textures and massive reverberating sounds, with the coagulation of these elements toward the end creating a very full bodied atmosphere of orchestral/noise proportions. The grey vinyl with blue streaks makes quite a nice looking piece of wax.

Von Thronstahl (Ger) "Imperium Internum" CD 2000 Cold Spring Records

Hello? I think we have a new contender rising to make challenge for the neo-classic crown. The statements and actions of the group aside (which seem to have stirred quite some controversy in the underground recently), this is an extremely ambitious debut given the breadth of influence and sound incorporated into this. While all the obvious martial themes are here (including pounding rhythms, profound horn and string accompaniments), the grand orchestrations all fused together with vocals of a rasping spoken quality and an industrial noise underbelly. Yet while these form the CD's core, many other sounds, vocalisations and instrumentations create a multi-dimensional work. The prominent female spoken vocals on 'Schwarz, Weiss, Rot' sit within a menacing framework of multi-layered strings and brass instrumentation, with male voice delivering a German speech in a background of industrial gritty textures. The epic piano piece 'The Majestic Return' is fleshed out by clean guitars, snare and tympani rolls, and full classical orchestration in the midst of roaring crowds and warlike sounds. The power is increased another notch on 'Kristall/Kristur', with classical melody lines taking a sweeping path above the rigid fast-pounding beats, while the vitriolic speech comes to the fore. Half industrial/half classical, the harsh looped sounds of 'Under the Mask of Humanity' add the grittiness of presentation, with the repeated vocal line likewise rasping in delivery. The harsh battle tank rhythms of 'Sturmzeit' eclipse the forcefulness of any previous track, rolling ever forward in warlike intent, snippets of choirs melded into the quick loops of pounding beats and shrill orchestrations. The following track then comes as a complete surprise, with its folkish strains of strummed acoustic guitar and relaxed framework of semi-romantic musical backing. A reflective sorrowful sound is appropriated on 'Noch Bluht Im Geist Verbogen' removing the martial undertones, leaving a framework of deep brooding classical melodies, while the massive brass sounds of 'Atlantis Teil' cuts in and out of snippets of what sounds like an 'Oi' band and other beats, voices, and sounds, as if the main backing has been set against someone flipping through radio static and finding the odd sound filler (which remarkably works extremely well). Another acoustic guitar number, 'Turn the Centuries' while still folkish is much more epic sounding, the whisper vocals adding a spine chilling effect. 'Pontifex Solis' the track which concludes this stunning work is a piece which sees the melding of many elements of sound on the whole album, be those of martial drumming, sorrowful classical melodies, acoustic guitars, speech presentation vocals etc. In its more blatant aspects of attention grabbing within cover imagery, these elements can be overlooked when an album of this stature is pulled off as debut release. Given this fits very nicely alongside Turbund Sturmwerk's debut CD in its similar broad musical vision should tell you this is an item that must be placed high on your want list.

Where (Ita) "The Creatures of the Wind" CD 1999 Eibon Recordings

Within sub cultural genres, certain countries tend to spawn their own distinctive sound, with Italy being no exception. Where are very much part of this Italian sound, often characterised by sparse, minimalist dungeon ambience. Sweeping moisture-laden air swirls forth from the speakers on 'Boreas', as if a long sealed cavern has been breached for the first time in aeons. Rusted hinges creak and metal scrapes on metal, creating harsh unnerving sounds that elicit visions of things best not thought of lurking in the crevices of these cavernous soundscapes. 'Conoscenza oscura' contains what sounds like distant rolling thunder, creating an extreme sense of depth to the sound. Again the metallic noises are present, but this time they are off in the distance, muffled and subdued. 'Sa'rk'a'ny', which commences as an echoed minimalist offering, lulls the listener before unloading a whole segment of flesh-crawling metallic generated sounds that continue for the remainder of the 10-minute track. The crumbling textures of 'Cialarere' present a density of sound not present on the preceding tracks (with a wind encapsulating membrane preventing the sounds from sprawling outwards), while 'Streghe del vento' has a subsonic bass drone creating a low-level echoed ambience as many of the other metallic sounds are mixed or at minimum muffled by the bass textures (not that these don't make themselves fully felt toward to end of the piece). Although little is presented in the way of tunes or audible melodies (except on the last track), Where presents the atmospheres via ghostly haunting soundscapes of distant sounds, wind-swept textures, sporadic clatter, echoes and any other sound you would expect to hear in dungeons and catacombs described in HP Lovecraft's writings. Lastly, taking inspiration from and being dedicated to of variety of mythical entities from Italy, Greece and Hungary, Where has created a release that is really beyond the sort of ambience one could listen to when going to sleep given the unnerving qualities presented (believe me as I have tried this!). Eibon may not release a stack of items, but of the handful they do release you are assured of quality both musically and in presentation.

Yen Pox (USA) "New Dark Age" CD 2000 Malignant Records

Considering how highly anticipated it has been, where does one start with a review of the second Yen Pox album? Could it be that the passage of time has pegged expectations too high? Well, I am glad to say that this has both lived up to and ultimately surpassed any of my initial expectations. One thing that is instantly evident is the massive sound production and sweeping spaciousness of the tones. While the last album explored suffocating and confined subterranean depths, this has a less obvious organic edge, lending itself to spacious territory as if illustrating a lifeless barren wasteland as the twilight quickly recedes. This is not to say that the trademark depth and tone of Yen Pox's sound has at all been lost, as its bass-loaded intensity still gives my stereo a run for its money. The multi-dimensional layering of sound is another all-encompassing element - tones sweep in from all angles, rising and falling throughout the composition, with faint and barely recognisable melodies all the while playing in a catatonic fashion. For such slow moving soundscapes it is quite astounding how much variation and movement is to be found in each composition - never faltering or slowing down, constantly spiralling headlong into its self-supporting vortex as one piece slips into the next, constantly building on what has preceded it. All I can say in conclusion is get this disc and bow before the new master of dark ambience.

".....Armageddon, Apocalypse, End Time, Holocaust - call it what you will....."

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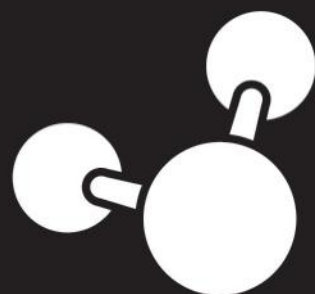
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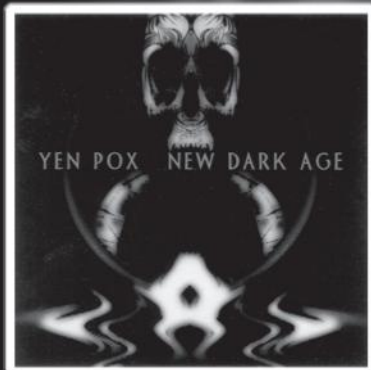
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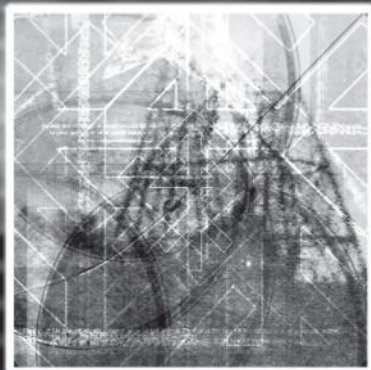
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