

# Gnu Wax

John Zorn

Spy vs. Spy

(Elektra Musician)

by Paul Morriss

This is Album Number three on Elektra of cover material from Zorn — the first two being *The Big Gundown* and *Spillane* — this one stays much more close to the original material than the earlier works, and *Spy* has two leading saxophone lights: **Tim Berne** and Zorn himself. The duo of **Joey Baron** and **Michael Vatcher** on drums are truly impressive (despite anything I may have said about Baron in the past). Mark Vatcher does a great job of playing bass against two seemingly out of control drummers. This record contains seventeen (yes seventeen!) **Ornette Coleman** tunes, for the most part played as if each note is to be their last. Again, taken on its own this release is excellent.

However, what is holding me back from giving this record a full tip of the hat is that which I mentioned earlier: this is his third album in a row of cover material. Projects like *Cobra*, *Naked City*, *Pool*, *Spillane* and so on draw too much on other people's music; Zorn's style of playing is defined in terms of other artist's styles, not his own: it's time for him to speak for himself.

Daniel Johnston

Yip Jump Music

(Homestead)

by Richard Thornley

**Daniel Johnston** used to live in West Virginia. The girl he loved married an undertaker so, depressed, he moved to Houston, Texas. For a while he worked at a carnival but he couldn't handle it and ran away to Austin, where he decided to stay. In between working at McDonald's and smoking tons of drugs (which left him with a permanent stutter!) he recorded tapes. The first tape he recorded while having a nervous breakdown. It was called *Hi, How Are You?* and on the basis of it, Daniel got to open up for some of the local bands in Austin (*Glass Eye*, *Scratch Acid*, *Hickoids*, etc.) who sort of adopted him.

From these beginnings comes *Yip Jump Music* on Homestead, a vinyl release of the tape Daniel released in 1983. It is a pastiche of insecurity, religion, hero worship and general insanity. It is one of the most soul-searching and harrowing musical releases that I have heard in years. Recorded in extremely lo-fi, Daniel sings in his high-pitched whine, plays cheap organ, toy guitar, percussion, and various other bits and pieces. The songs are likely first or second takes with the occasional muffed chord or clumsy passage just adding to the complete honesty or "home-madness" of the music. Odes to the **Beatles** ("The Beatles") and Casper the Friendly Ghost are side by side with intensely personal pieces like "Sorry Entertainer": "I'm a Loner. I'm a sorry entertainer, drove these demons out of my head with an organ and a pencil full of lead..." Then there's "Danny don't rapp": "...and on that sorry, sorry night when no hope was left in sight you took your life as lovers often do but I could have told you Danny this world was never meant for one as beautiful as...". WRy humour tempers the often grim little situations that fill Daniel's world.

Daniel is not a happy man but if you can get past the cheap sound you just might discover a very fulfilling slab of music. If you can imagine liking the Fall at their most minimal with **Jonathan Richman** singing then you just might like this record.

One Hundred Flowers

21st Guessing

DTK

by Meagan Perry

Out of Halifax, **One Hundred Flowers** are the winners of the "Best Unrecorded Artist" award at the 1989 Maritime Music Awards. I am shocked and disillusioned. As little as I know about the Maritimes, I am convinced that there are bands better than this one over there. Maybe they're better live, maybe the wrong album was labeled as One Hundred Flowers at the pressing plant, but I don't think so.

Listening to this album was, if you'll forgive me for using a western comparison, like being trapped in that vaguely timeless, apathetic oh-I-wish-this-was-over-but-I-guess-it-doesn't-matter-but-I'll-scream-if-it-isn't-soon district of the twilight one enters whilst driving to Moose Jaw at Christmas. It's flat. The songs on this album all sound the same, except for the intro to "Nothing is Hard", and with the possible exception of "The Best Status Symbol". It wouldn't be quite as bad if these tracks had been on opposite sides of the album, but they're both on side one. Side two through its six songs left me with no memory other than the twilight zone feeling.

There are a few good things about this band, however. They have a nice name, the singer can hold a tune, and the rest of the band play their instruments, if not brilliantly, at least competently. Like my dad always says "You have to be bad before you can get good." But did they have to do it on vinyl??

Fish and Roses

We Are Happy To Serve You

(Homestead)

by Christine Chomiak

Okay, okay, this band is not a take off on **Guns 'n' Roses**. **Fish and Roses** have been around since 1985, plus they're from the East Coast, New York City to be exact, not from the land of sun and surf like those hard rockin' dudes, and they probably smell different (get it?? Fish and roses, Ha, Ha.). But anyway, I digress.

*We Are Happy To Serve You* is the first full-length album put out by this trio and is it ever an experience to listen to. Start listening to this recording, and you'll notice the contrasts among the music lyrics, and the like. The lyrics are sometimes political, but the music has no real direction in that sense. It can be jazzy, bluesy, or just plain psychotic. One instance in contrast is **Sue Garner**, the bassist and vocalist for most of the cuts. Her voice is so clear and melodic with a down home feel to it, but the music surely is not. The bass almost keeps the beat; almost, and there is a lack of guitar type noise, but what totally blows away any typical rhythm is the keyboard, and what a keyboard it is! It is so dischordant that if you listen too intensely to it, you would go crazy if you want something without surprises and sneak attacks. **David Sutter** manipulates the keys so it really sounds like an out of tune, cheesy old organ, but it adds to the urgency of most of the cuts, be they soulful type tunes or not, creating confusion and contrast, and causing the tracks to flow from one to another. But hey, this is just swell. **Fish and Roses** even do a cover of a **Minutemen** ("Badges") and a **Blue Orchids** ("A Year with no Head") tune, ooh, plus **kramer** (the dude from Shimmy Disc Records and the band **B.A.L.L.**) produces the most chaotic tune called "Emergency Exit", a song that makes you feel you're stuck in a stadium full of rioting thugs, stampeding to the exits, crushing the helpless souls, PANIC...AHHH! No wonder on the back of the LP they thank **Thurston Moore** of **Sonic Youth** (who also partook in some producing).

But anyway, if you see this album (it's out on Homestead Records) or their earlier EP or their contributions to compilations, pick 'em up, dammit.

glenn's  
tape

worms



compiled by Glenn Drexhage

In the first in what we hope to be many submissions, CJSR Music Director Glenn Drexhage checks out indie cassettes locally and around yon planet.

**Argument Club** — Argument Club

Yet another addition from Sherwood Park's infamous Argument Club, featuring three new tunes. "Rudyard's Story" is fried swamp rock along with CCR samples that would make Mr. Fogerty proud. "Occam's Razor" and "Skrather" focus more on electronics and studio effects, the former being filler, the latter being a rather nasty and noisy sound venture into yr collective conscience. Oh yeah — a real piece of cover artwork to boot. Be the first hipster on yr block to have one.

(Paul Morriss, 464-4886)

**Sensible Footwear** — Sensible Footwear

New offerings from this all-female feminist trio out of the UK. Quaint, poppy melodies provide the backdrop for social and political commentary dealing with everyday problems facing today's women. SF walk the line between humorous and serious subject matter with considerable tact. Only occasionally does the rhetoric wear a bit thin — "If we'd been the Rolling Stones, any rock n' roll band, we'd be written off as useless if we didn't have a man." Yeah, right. Also, the band could afford to expand lyrically — 13 songs dealing with the same general theme prove to be rather predictable. Witty and thought-provoking, but Frightwig they ain't.

(Sensible Footwear Theatre Company P.O. Box 217, London, England NW1 0LN)

**Mind Cycle** — Mass Lobotomy

Bizarre musings from this duo (Ron Happ and Hanson Tam) hailing from Burnaby, BC. Heavy doses of metallic percussion, drum machines, guitar noodlings, and various other electronic effects are combined for a lacklustre end result. The songs become far too self-indulgent for their own good, as is the case with "Effluence," where bad metal posturing stagnates for about five minutes too long. Some interesting ideas, which definitely require some more work.

(Ron Happ, SweateX Records, 4045 Clinton St., Burnaby, BC, V5J 2K4)

**Nowhere Blossoms** — Nowhere Blossoms

Self titled effort from a local band consisting of ex-members of Entirely Distorted and The Bettys. The songs are straight ahead, catchy pop, yet with a raw edge which keeps them from slipping into mundanity. Overall, a pleasant listening experience. Nothing really groundbreaking, but then again, what is?

(David Jackson, #38 11016-109 Ave. Edmonton, AB T5H 1E1)

**Earthling** — Earthling

Heavy stuff, dude! Vancouver's Earthling wear their guitars on their sleeves with pride. Strains of MC5, Deep Purple, Sabbath and Zeppelin mix with yr basic wall of grunge. Unfortunately, oodles of bands have taken the same approach since Guns 'n Poses, so there's not too many surprises. The production also seems to a bit too polished for this brand of mudrock. Nevertheless, some heavy grooving is evident, so if that's yr bag, chow down and feel yr hair grow.

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