

Long live the new flesh

by Andrew M. Duke

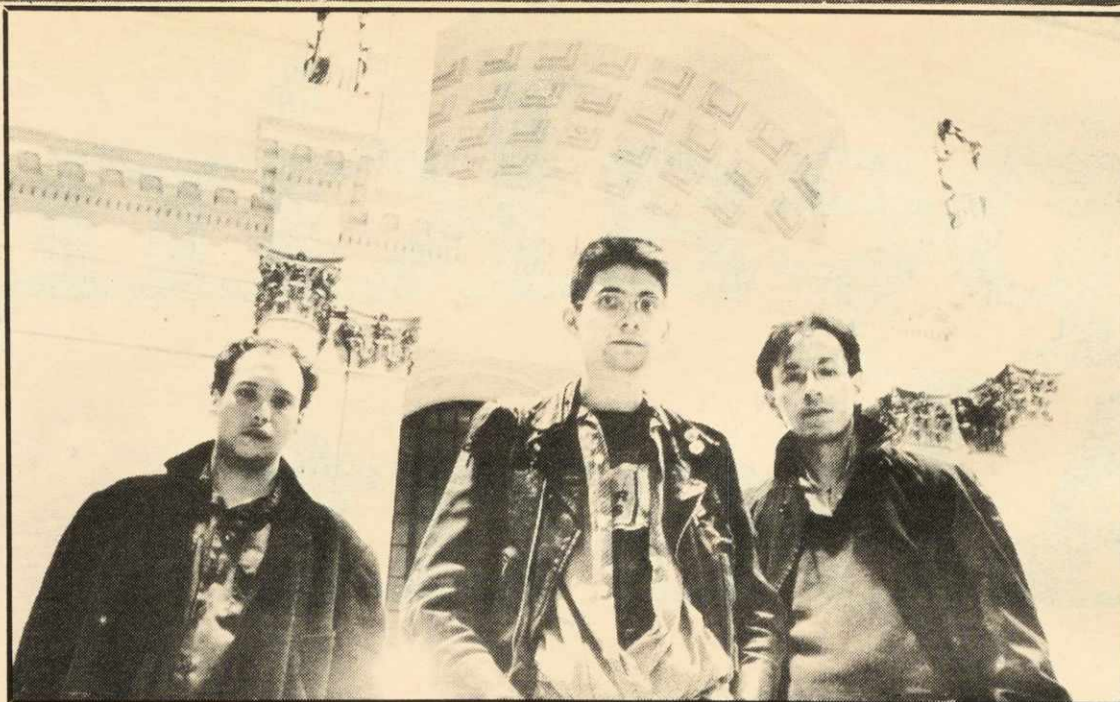
Sick, Macho, Violent: these are the words Clint ruin (aka Jim Thirlwell) uses to describe *Dirt-dish*, the percussion-oriented album he has made with ex-Swans drummer Roli Mosimann under the Wiseblood guise.

The result is a ride on a jackhammer that grabs you by the throat and shakes, forcing new perspectives. Originally called Foetus Flesh, the name Wiseblood refers to the American art film directed by the late John Huston.

The macho/violent theme on the brilliantly abrasive *Dirt-dish LP* (Relativity) is present in "Prime Gonzola" and "The Fudge Punch", two power/sex expositions, and culminates in "Stumbo". This track is the story of a demented cartoon character in a massive '55 Chevy who picks up hitchhikers for all the wrong reasons.

"O-O (Where Evil Dwells)" tells of Northport, Long Island's Ricky Kasso. A 17-year-old Neo-satanist, he killed a man during a drug-induced stupor in 1984, and later committed suicide. The emotion-wrought "Someone Drowned In My Pool", where Ruin sings rather than screams, continues the sick/violent thread that leads to "God-brain". A tribute to Jim Jones, the humanitarian-turned "Kool-Aid Kasanova" and leader of the People's Temple cult in Jonestown, Guyana (a small country bordering Brazil), "Godbrain" examines the personality that convinced 900 people to drink cyanide-laced grape Kool-Aid in November 1978's "revolutionary" mass suicide.

The "Ramrod 12" (Some Bizarre) is Ruin's latest baby under his Scraping Foetus Off The Wheel title.



Big Black blacks out

by Andrew M. Duke

Walk into the Chicago camera store and you would never guess that Steve Albini, the man with the glasses working at retouching your photos during the day, is the leader of an important noise guitar therapy class at night. Albini (vocals/guitar), along with fellow guitar doctor Santiago Durango, bassist Dave Riley, and Roland, their ever-faithful drum machine, have been shocking audiences with their combination of guitar fuzz, merciless mechanical drumming, and true National Enquirer-type stories in the form of Big Black. The next and final shock the scene will receive will not be such a cathartic experience. Big Black have decided to break up.

Looking first at the origin of the Big Black beast, one would find self-confessed wimp Albini, after being kicked out of various bands, recording the first Big Black EP, *Lungs*. He would later

be joined by Durango, a founding member of Naked Raygun, and Riley, formerly of Savage Beliefs. All three were insecure/intelligent enough to continue their daytime pursuits: Albini, who wrote for the hardcore magazine *Forced Exposure* (until he took credit for a story he did not write), Durango, who worked as a legal aide, and Riley, who studied film at Columbia University.

The Big Black machine released three EPs, two 7"s, and the critically acclaimed *Atomizer LP*. By this time, America (as well as Germany and other countries) had taken notice of Big Black. Albini would tell you, "we sound like three intelligent people in a car crash" (Riley was involved in such a mishap), but others would tell you something different.

Big Black force grisly (and actual) tales on their audience — they tell it like it is. *Atomizer's*

"Jordan, Minnesota" tells of a twisted town where child-swapping is encouraged. "My Disco", a track from the *Headache EP* that followed, is the true story of a doctor who, unable to accept that his child has been born brain-damaged, throws the baby against the floor until it dies. Other topics include wife-beating ("Fists of Love"), pyromania ("Kerosene"), slaughterhouses ("Cables"), and Mussolini's wardrobe ("Il Duce").

Big Black is not a case of nastiness used as a shock tactic. Albini explained their attitude in a *Sounds* interview: "I believe in saying what I think and that the band should deal with matters that most people would rather publicly deny existed."

It is because of that very state-

ment that Big Black have decided to call it quits. Albini feels they have become too popular and no longer receive any respect. He does not want his band to become the next "flavour of the week".

Big Black concerts have, unfortunately, become "some sort of social function", Albini is quoted as saying in *Sounds*, and that certainly defeats his purpose.

A new single and album are left with us to remember Big Black. The 7" single (with clever sleeve photos) features a cover of Cheap Trick's "He's a Whore" and "The Model" by Kraftwerk (a perfect track for Roland). No stranger to covers, they managed to twist Wire's "Heartbeat" on a previous single.

The final album, *Songs About Fucking* (Touch and Go Records), pries more nails out of the middle-American coffin. "Columbian Necktie", South American slang for throat-slitting, takes on a new meaning here. "L-Dopa", based on a true account by Dr. Oliver Sacks in *Awakenings*, explores the feeling of loss victims experience after waking up from a sleeping sickness-induced slumber of as many as forty years. The LP is another mind-altering experience, a bad trip on guitar screech — just as Big Black would have it.

Albini plans to form another band in the future, but for now will be content to produce bands such as Urge Overkill and Honeymoonkillers. Durango is going to law school and Riley is considering another stint a college.

Until Albini once again emerges from the dark pool of hard news, you had better start taking a closer look at your photographic prints.

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