

Choice Cuts

by Jonah CAMPBELL

Album: *The Shape of Punk to Come*

Artist: Refused

Label: Burning Heart Records.

"I've got a bone to pick with capitalism ... and a few to break!" How could anyone not like a band who kicks off an album with a line like that? Unfortunately, I am totally uninformed about the band's history, political influences, and too superficially judgmental to give their album a good listen before forming an opinion on it. And that's exactly where I stood when I first encountered this album. My initial reaction was "The Shape of Punk to Come? Who are these pretentious jerks that I have never heard of, making such an audacious claim about the future condition of punk rock? Well, I never." And that's basically what I operated on for about a year and a half, before, after repeated urgings from associates in whose musical tastes I otherwise had quite sufficient faith, I sat down and gave this CD a serious listen. Now, after firsthand experience (instead of the unfounded conjecture which I still hold oh so dear) I have to say that, damn, this is a damn good album. Hot damn, even.

If this is indeed the shape of punk to come, bring it on, cos this is exactly what the stagnated, formulaic quagmire that "punk" has become needs right now. Unfortunately for, well, everybody, it's taken several years for me to get around to reviewing this album, and history tells us that to a great degree it sank as a threat to the decaying juggernaut of this so-called "countercultural" musical genre. Not that Refused didn't make waves with this album (which received much wider distribution than any of their previous, more traditional offerings), but pretty much anyone who took notice was most likely predisposed to hear the wakeup call these kids were trying to issue forth.

While this album definitely still falls within the purview of hard-

Eivind Aarset



core, it stretches, contests, and plays with the boundaries of the genre, incorporating heavy rock and jazz influences, even lapsing occasionally into bouts of techno, and taking some serious nods from the folk-music as protest tradition. Lyrically (and even musically, one could argue) they are an uncompromisingly political band, and follow in the tradition of heavily aestheticized intellectual social criticism and romanticized revolution of the Paris student revolt of '68. These kids are heavy into their situationist rhetoric and neo-marxian theory, and a definite post-modern affinity for pastiche comes through in both their music and lyrics. And it rocks. Stick a spoon in me, I'm done.

Album: I'm not sure if this album has a name

Artist: Creation Is Crucifixion

Label: Hactivist

God, do I even listen to any bands these days who aren't fans of Debord? Craggy ... Anyhoo, Creation Is Crucifixion play crazy insane-ass-drummer technical metal with really sick heavy slow parts and blast sections that sound really, really, way too much like they're using a drum machine for me to think that they're drummer boy doesn't have cybernetic implants or some shit. I wouldn't put it past them, either, as most of their lyrics centre around high technology and the information society, and the increasing domination of the synthetic

universe over human existence. Etcetera. They also have this weird habit of naming their songs about three different things, like "Subversion as a Tactical Metaphor aka Species Traitor aka Technology is Our Iron Lung," or "The Allegory of the Algorithm (or how I learned to stop worrying and love mimesis)," to the point where it starts to get on one's nerves.

Creation Is Crucifixion is more than a metal band, however, as they are intimately tied to the "Carbon Defence League" and a part of the Hactivist, the anarchist "Tactical Media Arts and Engineering Collective," who are involved in everything from art exhibitions, to giving lectures/panels, to culture jamming and "semiotic terrorism," to distributing software detailing how to reprogram game boys and teach elementary school kids how to masturbate. So in other words, they've got a lot on their plate, and I couldn't even begin to get into it in this review, nor would anybody really expect me to I guess. (*Lazy bastard -Ed.*)

For more info on the band, their affiliations and activities, check out www.hactivist.org. So yeah, whether you're into it for the cyberpunk techno theory and media activism combined with critical school social analysis, or just the devastating metal insanity, CIC have a lot to offer. Oh yeah, and this CD is possibly the most wicked-awesome piece of plastic I've ever seen in my life. Too sweet. On account of the fact that there are

only actually three songs on this CD, there's a lot of blank space, which CIC dealt with creatively by making most of the cd entirely transparent, printed with ASCII design and little rows of binary. That may just sound stupid (if you can even get a picture of it in your head), but trust me, it's sweet. See it some time (yeah, who am I kidding?). (www.hactivist.org)

Album: *Light Extracts*

Artist: Eivind Aarset's Electronique Noire

Label: Jazzland.

Once you get past the incredibly pretentious name of this band/guy, the music is actually pretty good, and really, the more you think about it, the more appropriate the title becomes. The disk starts out on a pretty ambient, somewhat trippy note, but over the course of eight songs (which have a pleasant way of slipping one into another without you really noticing) it moves in and out of trip hop, straight up techno, psychedelics, noise, and even some terrain very reminiscent of the Goa trance coming at us from British DJs in India in the early-mid 90s, all while operating under the banner of the "New Jazz."

Apparently, Eivind Aarset is a norwegian guitarist with some degree of cred round those parts, and I can see why. I initially took this to be unexciting but definitely satisfactory background music, but the more I listen to it, the more I come to appreciate its complexity and dynamism. I mean, a portion of every song could probably qualify for one of those mail-order self-hypnosis tapes where some yahoo talks over minimalist soothing background sounds (minus the yammering yahoo), but then about twenty-five minutes into it you realize that you're listening to some pretty seriously chaotic guitar noise, and you didn't even notice.

(www.jazzlandrec.com)