

The Shadow and the Music

by Adam Klein

The music of CABARET VOLTAIRE, THROBBING GRISTLE, and TUXEDO-MOON have incorporated the intricate web of correspondence and association to attack more of, and at a purer level, the dualities that so possess the spirit of contemporaries. As I have heard these bands termed "Art Damage", I will assume that such terminology is derived through the dynamic form and structures of the music (this concern for form having, indeed, references to the nature of art) and though the fact that the music, generally, has little regard for the dance rhythms that have become base in much of the New Music, often its only means of propulsion, pulse. There is no damage here, Certainly not to the art world.

What is most important to recognize about these bands is their unspent vocabulary of the peripherals. CABARET VOLTAIRE's hollow, sucking, vacuous sounds - sounds like the cracking of matches and the specific darknesses implied before the necessary "light" (there are many darknesses for each band the way the eskimos have many words for "types" of snow). THROBBING GRISTLE's urban, synthetic, industrial sounds - the hypertension, the menace, the conscience... and TUXEDOMOON's more linear expressions of isolation, nervous despair as the mind questions its own control. The dreamlike quality of the music is often endowed with ironic or pathetic lyric humor which, perhaps (if in quantity alone) sets TUXEDOMOON off from the other bands. The sound (often visual sound) correspondences (juxtaposition and/or chance) create the tensions on which circumstance (the drama) reveals itself full scale, with its emotive power coming from the concretism inherent in musical form and the loose conjunction of uncertain sounds (which comprise the music) creating sensory images far related. These images may be related through creative processes set in motion by the listener, or left alone, accepted and appreciated as a pattern, or puzzle, or hybrids.

The discovery comes in the dynamic links, a world between the sensorial and mental processes best described in the "instances" of listening, often the same way in which we are surprised by sudden clarity in amassed thoughts in periods just before sleep. In similar periods the rational linkage of thoughts is unnecessary, certainly unattainable in moments the bands describe, moments of exhausted possibility.

The night stretches on and on, you are further from sleep than waking.

Seeing the many approaches of the unsettled, we have determined their validity - sought the shadows, our dark shapes always behind us (erased by night when they are part of us and we must prowl). The form of "Art Damage" is more assuming in its retirement of the binary musics of the past, the formulaic return, the Chorus. In art damage melody and harmony are often inseparable, fragmentary and without the functional aspects of composition. This, as it has convinced us in the classical music of the 20th Century, has

given rise to the expressive, expansive nature of our thinking and our feeling. And so, though the music has become more difficult to tailor to our own shape (often I hear "yes, I like them but can't listen to them all the time"), the shadow becomes thicker, endowed with its own processes of thought, its own moments, tensions, releases - it is more than a shadow now - it is a soul, a dark soul to be learnt by, to exchange with.

Music. Companion to man's consciousness. Freed by its unconscious as man is freed from reality by the dreams, from the dream by waking.

Our worlds are interchanged. I see that there is a certain point in form where we reach life. A certain point in life where we reach change. We have more than a shadow, more than the dream - we have an alter image comprised not just of circumstance but of reason.

Things become more clear. I almost see myself in everything.



THROBBING GRISTLE.... just another pop band?

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SELECTED ALBUMS:

CABARET VOLTAIRE: MIX UP (ROUGH TRADE)

THROBBING GRISTLE: FUNERAL IN BERLIN (ZENSOR)

TUXEDOMOON: HALF MUTE (RALPH)

"Mix Up" is Cabaret Voltaire's first album and probably their most successful in its transmitting the network of questions behind experience, which the objective of the band was at this point. The band has maintained the same sound vocabulary (the sound of the static void) with some additions to it in later works. This is the best application, though. Many of the songs are narrative tales. "Fourth Shot" and "Photophobia" are exceptional works on this album. The music is meshlike, hollow, infinite and working around the mystery of the recited lyrics.

Throbbing Gristle's "Funeral in Berlin" is the last album by the band before splitting up. It is their most accomplished work compositionally. Hot on the heels of "Can the World Be As Sad As It Seems" in its unrelenting horror show vision, the fogged away guitar working a frenetic backdrop for the howls of Genesis P. Orridge or the destructive innocence of Cosey Fanny. This is their most anarchic in form. Full of foreign elements, comments on comments.

Tuxedomoon's first album on Ralph records after some evolutionary singles with and without Winston Tong. "Half Mute" deals with interiors, space. Motive, rhythmic blend of synthesizer, electronic percussion, electric violin and saxophone. Internal confrontation, loneliness, fear, all a part of the "mood" music. Cohesive elements found in repetitions and gradual change (found in works of Phil Glass and Steve Reich). Texture is thick but cleaner than the albums of Cabaret Voltaire or Throbbing Gristle.

don't just think about it.....

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