

CRAWLING WITH TARTS



In order for you to imagine what are CRAWLING WITH TARTS, what their music is and why they are named one of the strangest band ever, I've decided to reprint here some reviews about CWT taken from various publications. I don't know how legal it is, but I am sure that it will be really interesting to know the opinions about CWT by several "professionals".

CWT "Voclianna" C42 Cr02 (Release date: 26/12/86)

Glen Thrasher in "Lowlife": "CRAWLING WITH TARTS apply a vast array of ideas. There is no way of knowing from minute to minute what direction they will go. Still nothing sounds misplaced. The whole is as meticulously conceived, composed, and arranged as any home recording I have heard."

CWT "Bled es Siba" 2xC90 Cr02 (Release date: 15/8/88)

Glen Thrasher in "Lowlife": "CRAWLING WITH TARTS have been putting out amazing works on cassettes for some time now... Yet nothing I have heard previously from this duo has struck home dead center in the way this three hour gem has... The music comes to life in the room between the listener's ears. Repetitive, trance inducing, and powerfully moving, the sounds on these two tapes comprise one of the year's major releases."

CWT "AA Redbox Pahoohee" C62 Cr02 (Release date: early 1991)

Todd Zachritz in "Godsend": "Sounds to me like a primitive tribe caught inside a grimy subway station... Musically CWT combine wind instruments, tape loops, and primitive object percussion. It's a sound that's anything but mellow. Well-done."

CWT "Radio 45" 7" 45 RPM (Release date: 29/09/91)

Mike McGonigai in "Chemical Imbalance": "This band is fucking amazing... A genuinely childlike joy of experimentation is everywhere on their recordings. It is the sound of grownups at play, a sound I never fail to enjoy. Simply as essential as early RED KRAYOLA or the latest YAMATZUKA EYE."

CWT "1 Snak 2 Rider" C46 Cr02 (Release date: 17/01/93)

Mick Regic in "M+E Newsletter": "Now this is well different, not what I expected from a band with a name like that! This is like something from the "serious" world of avant garde composition. The two pieces are written by one Michael Gendreau, one recorded live at the Kennel Club in San Francisco... You get lots of silence, intercut with sounds, all sorts of sounds. You wait, you listen, nothing, you wait, you listen, then something. The performers use boxes of pottery chips, saw blades, fishbowls, gas pipes, prayer stones, bass trombone, harmonica, violin, Helmholtz resonator, and whistles... amongst other things. I'd love to have been at the gig! For those who take the avant garde seriously, this would be a breath of fresh air..."

CWT "Operas" 12" 33 RPM (Release date: 12/04/93)

Byron Coley in "Forced Exposure": "... a very fetching LP... This is the aural equivalent of those movies that are designed to be projected onto your closed eyelids. The sounds here move around behind an array of obscuring curtains, with pieces of "found" sound emerging like palimpsests from amidst delicate & jittery "live" music. The manipulations of records on this are unlike any conceptually similar work being done with turntables & the combinations of noise that are invented here are elegant & original."

Todd Zachritz in "Godsend": "... This is experimental music that doesn't follow the Industrial or gloom/doom paths. CWT produce a happy sort of noise, full of life, wonder, curiosity, and bewilderment. A rich and individual blend of cultures and influences. Recommended."



Fax received from a Russian DJ working in Moscow, translated by Jeff Surak: "Wonderful Operas! Noisy!... When I was listening to "Orses Opera" (very loud) yesterday, my neighbours who live on the floor below were exasperated and decided to take vengeance - they poured water into the doorbell, which caused a short circuit, and then the bell rang for 10 minutes until we dried it out with the help of a candle. It was really cool - my dad was all nerves and whole time asked me, why I listen to such depraved music."

CWT "Mayten's Throw" CD (Release date: 16/04/94)

Megan McLaughlin in "CMJ": "Fuzzy noise paired with a finely-tuned sense of melody makes for music that is experimental and softly appealing, both discordant and concordant. CRAWLING WITH TARTS combines these elements with joyful abandon, abruptly leaving a verse/chorus structure to flow into a deliberately sloppy avant-garde section. Although the form is that of a much more awkward record, CRAWLING WITH TARTS' two main musicians - Suzanne Dycus and Michael Gendreau - ensure that not only are the ideas original, but that they are comprehensible as well. Each song contains some intriguing element, from the clattering drum taps of "The Bean Threaders" to the lo-fi rock on "Cotton Flies" to the cocktail Jazz feel that slides into acoustic Folk on "They Kill And Think". CRAWLING WITH TARTS straddles the line between obscure and Pop with flair, and resulting "Mayten's Throw" is a very listenable piece of experimental noise."

CWT "Madeline" CD (Release date: 28/01/95)


RKF in "Dead Angel": "CRAWLING WITH TARTS is a duo that has my respect, mainly because they don't allow themselves to be pigeon-holed. Each release is contextually ever so distant from the next. If one ever dare think they understand the formula, CRAWLING WITH TARTS will just throw out another curve ball, leaving one in the corner and scratching the old noggin. Although all of the tracks appear in a very coherent order, it's interesting to note that they were all recorded somewhere between 1983 and 1994. The release is about the most Pop-oriented thing I've ever heard them do, except to say that it's unmistakably quite quirky and angular too. Attentive listening will reveal some of the inner secrets of what makes this band so damn great."

CWT "Grand Surface Noise Opera 3 and 4" CD (Release date: 31/01/95)

Chris W. Becker in "Factsheet Give": "With almost every recording that I put on for review, I immediately get a mental image to go along with the music. I rarely include it in the review as it's usually just my personal association. This disc, however, brings up such a strong picture that I'm sure it will help explain the music. The first of the two pieces, the 47 minute "Grand Surface Noise Opera Nr. 3" makes me think of walking through an abandoned but still functioning exhibit of talking displays; something like the World's Fair or an older version of The Epcot Center. You can hear the strained whirring of all the machines in operation as they talk to you, giving you the various details of modern life and trying to sell their miracle products in vain. It's a work similar to something NEGATIVLAND might produce but with less traditional music. The follow piece "Nr. 4" is a noisy, brash collage of drums, tinkling toy cymbals, and truck horns that make a bizarre performance of experimental sound. A brilliant alternative to almost everything else on the market."

Cipher in "Industrial Nation": "This is, without a doubt, one of the most strange compact discs I've ever heard. I speak from experience, having heard some of the most bizarre compact discs available. This is the only band I've ever heard who actually go as far as to sample a turkey. Hearing this album puts you in a mood that could only be described as wacky. There are two pieces on this compact disc. The first one has the turkey and the second one has a nice tribal beat. The first track also contains all sorts of strange bird sounds along with many other oddities that form a nice sound collage. If you like your Industrial on the weird side, here's a recording for you."

Peter Johnston in "Out Of Bounds": "Warning: not intended for consumption by those who use the word "weird" in their daily vocabulary. Performed live at Mills College in 1993 by the composers, both of these operas use as many as four turntables simultaneously playing an assortment of institutional records (the sort



that usually feature anything but music), add one-of-a-kind transcription discs (the predecessors to Dictaphones), with percussion used as an accent. These "primary form generators" are layered and faded in and out at predetermined intervals, giving them a function analogous to traditional instruments capable of producing sustained textures. The result is a deep and mesmerizing soundscape."

CWT "Sarajevo Center Metal Doors" CD (Release date: 23/03/05)

Darren Bergstein in "i/e": "A perennial stalwart on the experimental music scene, CRAWLING WITH TARTS' work is strange, provocative, impenetrable and baffling, generally all at the same time. "Sarajevo Center Metal Doors" is a near-minimal set of recordings using an unorthodox collection of instruments (whistles, cowbells, beans, stones, fish bowls, pans, saw blades, etc.) executed with reckless abandon and seemingly little regard for any Westernized notion of melody, harmony, or rhythm. Sounds exist in an unspecified plane, random discreet noises announce themselves and vanish; it's all in service of a new environmental aesthetic where one can stand the very definitions of "music" on its head. What remains a mystery is how appealing these sounds truly are - in that quandary does there lie an answer?"

V.Edgar: Tell me, please, when and how CWT was born. Where did you met and what urged you to compose and record these awful sounds?

Michael Gendreau : We started in 1983. Nine months before that, Mic met Suz when he joined a band in which she played bass. It was a kind of New York-style thrash music. But then we quit together for various reasons, and started CWT with a totally different sound.

V.E.: What does your music reflect: your inner life, surrounding us reality, or maybe it could be more precisely qualified as an outcome of experiments with sound - simply the inevitable product of physical process?

M.G.: Both, actually. We have our own internal reality that we like to reflect, but also it is difficult not to respond to the world around us. We don't participate in any particular musical "scene", so the reflections from the outside are more likely to be rooted in non-musical activities or thoughts.

V.E.: Do you record in studio, or you have enough equipment for making master-tapes at your home?

M.G.: We have recorded in outside studios, but mostly it is done our own studio. In our career, there has been a constant struggle with poor and outdated machinery for making and recording music, and eventually we learned to turn this to our advantage. Things have always been difficult for us in that regard, but we don't focus on it, and instead, get to work to make the best music we can with what we have (and also with our limited, or "special" skills). In the end, the urge to create our ideas is stronger than the limitations.

V.E.: Sometimes it is hard to name your records as "music" (however, it is not my opinion), but there are some songs in your "Mayten's Throw" album sung by Suzanne and, therefore, sincerely melodic. Did you ever have a wish to compose an album of such "almost normal" songs? Maybe your title of "one of the strangest bands" is gradually becoming a leash which limits your freedom?

M.G.: We do have a CD out which is a collection of songs only, called "Madeleine". It's not well known. No, a reputation for doing what we want has not been limiting for us creatively, although it can be limiting commercially. No matter what kind of music one makes, if you stick to the same style, it seems like it must be easier to hold an audience. We do seem to scare people away sometimes because of our unpredictable style changes, but that is less important to us than being free to do what we want.

V.E.: What bands did you listen at school age and what do you listen now? Could you name me any bands which were born in 1997 and comparable with THROBBING GRISTLE or WHITEHOUSE?

M.G.: At school age, I at first listened to the records my parents had, mostly movie soundtracks and "exotica" music. Then when I got my own records, they were



faster and more complex. I don't know any bands born in 1997 sounding like those two bands you mention, but we only need one of each anyway, don't we?

V.E.: You have released quite a few CDs. Excuse me, but where production money came from? Is ASP your own label, and if yes, do you issue some other musician's records there, except yourself?

M.G.: We work day jobs, but for the most part, the releases pay for themselves. Some of our records have been put out by other companies. ASP has so far only released music in which we are in some way involved.

V.E.: I know that you moved from Oakland to San Mateo. I don't know how much is the distance between these two places, but is it probable that this fact is somehow related with music? Maybe you had any problems with neighbours?

M.G.: They're close. We move around a lot, but for other reasons. No one has chased us out, yet (but we have caused some people to stay away).

V.E.: Have anyone of you musical education?

M.G.: Yes.

V.E.: Is it important for CWT?

M.G.: No.

V.E.: Do you perform? If yes, how often?

M.G.: Yes, in fact, most of our recent long pieces were composed for performances, and only recorded later. We tend to go through periods when we perform quite often, and then take a break. Lately we have not been pursuing performance situations, but do occasionally accept them when offered.

V.E.: What was your choice on President elections? Are you interested in politics, and how much politicians are interested in CWT?

M.G.: We are interested in politics (and sociology as well). Unfortunately, it is impossible at this time to have a worthwhile choice or say in the US elections. This is only a partial democracy (a small part). We get to choose between two preselected and nearly identical figureheads who will do their best to ensure that the interests of large wealthy corporations are maintained.

V.E.: In you records a listener could hear various drums, sticks, tambourines, trumpets, etc. The same instruments could be seen in documentary films about savage tribes. Are you interested in their culture, and do you think they have any?

M.G.: Most definitely they have culture, to continue the generalization, and one that is commonly more coherent and ubiquitous than that of industrial societies. We greatly respect elementalism for its apparent simplicity but inherent complexity.

V.E.: Where your records could be bought? Do you have distributors, and if yes, who they are?

M.G.: Our recordings can be obtained through us (ASP, P.O.Box 5587, San Mateo CA 94402, USA), and several other distributors including Anomalous, Audiofile Tapes, Fisheye, Forced Exposure, Metamkine, Realization, Silenzio, Staalplaat, Subterranean, Verge, Wayside, and others.

V.E.: Your musical forecast for 2001, please.

M.G.: It's only 3 years away... we have no idea what it will be like, but we will keep our eyes open.

V.E.: Thanks a lot for this interview. I highly appreciate it and wish you produce a sound that could be compared with a blow of baseball bat onto a listener's cranium! Good luck to you!!

M.G.: And thank you! We hope you keep going... I'm pretty sure we will.

ASP, P.O.Box 5587, San Mateo CA 94402, U.S.A.