

Label Readies Retrospective of Plundering Composer

Written by John James
Tuesday, 10 April 2001 18:00

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• The Canadian indie label Fony Records has just released a two-CD retrospective of one of alternative art-rock's seminal architects, John Oswald, the original sampling poltergeist and plunderphonician. Oswald's 25-year history as a composer, audio agitator, and media deconstructionist rose highest above the radar when he produced his legendary Plunderphonics experiment in the early 1980s. The concept was radical for the time – using “state-of-the-art” computer and tape-editing gadgetry to drop pop standards and whatnot into the blender, like a Harold Pinter play on acid. The shock! The hubris! The precursor of today's flaming debates over the ownership and control of digital creations! Sony Music's interest in “protecting the image” of Michael Jackson and other artists sampled by Oswald put the legal squash on a Robin Hood legacy. Perhaps Joan of Arc might better suit the outcome – a complete seizure of the costly independent pressing under the grinding wheels of a waste crusher. Since that time these forbidden recordings have been passed among art-school fan boys, keeping the art of noise-collage tomfoolery alive with each dub. I myself was introduced to Oswald's work in the 1980s through a bandit art gang in Ames, Iowa, whose mission statement was to spread the word of suppressed recordings – send them a blank cassette and they sent it back dubbed with mischief. I think mine came with Negativland's priceless mix of U2 and cursin' Casey Casem, howling blue on a hijacked American Top 40 audio feed. This new box set, titled 69 Plunderphonics 96, features 60 tracks and a hand-bound hardcover book of interviews and historical context.

• Look for the Pop-Art imprint of San Francisco's Man's Ruin Records to make your eyeballs bleed a little bit extra this time. This month the label releases its extra-squawky TV Eye #1, a VHS video of interviews, live footage, and backstage commotion. Roll out the dirty shag carpet and warm up your speakers – Queens of the Stone Age, Nebula, Unida, and High on Fire sludge through this 45-minute time-capsule affair with director Jenny McGee.

• John Fahey's Revenant Records label has announced that its 40-year dream project is near completion – a stunning seven-CD box set from Mississippi Delta bluesman Charlie Patton. Five of the discs purport to contain every session Patton ever recorded, remastered and re-pitched to definitive perfection. The other two discs will contain material by a selection of Patton's peers and an interview. Housed in a mock 78-RPM binder/box, the set also promises a lush book of advertisements, 78-RPM labels, and an essay. Too rich for your blood? Don't fret; last week the

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label issued a single-disc sampler from the upcoming box.

- A nice surprise is due this month from the United Kingdom for Pink Floyd connoisseurs. An import-only collection of Syd Barrett rarities titled *Wouldn't You Miss Me* features 22 tracks like the BBC session of "Two Of a Kind," an instrumental take on "Golden Hair," and the previously unheard "Bob Dylan's Blues" from 1969 – that one's been hiding in David Gilmour's closet all these years.

Television Alert:

The Late Show with David Letterman welcomes Idlewild tonight, The Living End on Friday, Rod Stewart on Monday, and Janet Jackson and Jill Scott on Tuesday; Late Night with Conan O'Brien hosts Vertical Horizon on Friday overnight; and Saturday Night Live's musical guest this weekend is Eve.

New Releases Coming Tuesday, April 17:

... and like the winds, young grasshopper, are subject to change.

Sunshine Anderson – *Your Woman* (Atlantic)

Paul Burch – *Last of My Kind* (Merge) songs inspired by the Tony Early book *Jim, The Boy*

C Average – *The Second Reckoning* (Kill Rock Stars)

Cinerama – *John Peel Sessions (Manifesto)* cool collection of BBC acoustic and electric sessions featuring David Gedge of *The Wedding Present*

The Clientele – *Suburban Light* (Merge)

MJ Cole – *Sincere* (Island)

Elvis Costello – *The Very Best of* (Rhino) two-CD collection of 42 tracks spanning 1976 to 1999

Creeper Lagoon – *Take Back the Universe & Give Me Yesterday* (Dreamworks) on tour now with *Guided by Voices*

Dickies – "Free Willie" (Fat Wreck) seven-inch single

Ensign – *The Price of Progression* (Nitro) new from this New Jersey hardcore band

Alejandro Escovedo – *A Man under the Influence* (Bloodshot) featuring guests from *Superchunk* and the *Squirrel Nut Zippers*

Hog Molly – *Kung Fu Cocktail Grip* (Kool Arrow) the mighty return of Seattle grunge icon Tad Doyle on the new label of Faith No More's Bill Gould

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Mandalay – Solace (V2)

Mouse on Mars – Idiology (Thrill Jockey) in the studio with Doctor Rockit

MU330 – Live, Oh Well (Asian Man) new from the St. Louis high-energy band named for the high-school music class where they formed

Nocturne – Welcome to Paradise (Triple X) nu-metal out of Dallas, Texas

Michael Rose – Never Give It Up (Heartbeat) new from the lead singer of Black Uhuru

Tom Russell – Borderland (Hightone) featuring the legendary Ian McLagen on Hammond B3 organ

Savatage – Poets & Madmen (Nuclear Blast) all new concept album with vocalist Jon Oliva

Derek Sherinian – Inertia (Inside Out) former Dream Theater keyboardist's new solo CD with guest Zakk Wylde on a remake of Edgar Winter's "Frankenstein" and Charles Mingus' "Goodbye Porkpie Hat"

Sinomatic – Sinomatic (Atlantic)

Skarhead – NY Thugcore: The Hardcore Years 1994-2000 (Triple Crown)

P.F. Sloan – Child of Our Times (Varese Sarabande) 20-track collection of rare demos from 1965 to '67

Son of Sam – Songs from the Earth (Nitro) new collaboration of Samhain drummer London May, Danzig guitarist Todd Youth, and AFI vocalist Davey Havok

Thinking Fellers Union Local 282 – Bob Dinners & Larry Noodles Present Tubby Turdner's Celebrity Avalanche (Communion)

Trans-Global Underground – Yes Boss Food Corner (Mondo Rhythmica/Ark 21) DJ favorite whose multi-cultural membership weaves an original mix of dance, world music, and electronica

Unwound – Leaves Turn Inside You (Kill Rock Stars) available on two-LP vinyl or video-enhanced CD, this is the group's first studio album in three years and features guests Steve Fisk and Sleater-Kinney's Janet Weiss

various artists – Digital Empire: Mix Breed (Brooklyn Music Limited) featuring the pairings of Mercury Rev versus Chemical Brothers, Roni Size versus Fatboy Slim and Basement Jaks, and Mark Verbos versus John Selway

various artists – Dub Massive Volume One (Fuel 2000) nicely selected 20-track collection of

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classic dub from Mad Professor, Sly & Robbie, Augustus Pablo, Lee Perry, King Tubby, and more

various artists – Plastic Mutations: The Electronic Tribute to Radiohead (Vitamin) with cover contributions by Mitchell Sigman, Motor Industries, and Galactic Achievement Society

Rufus Wainwright – Poses (Dreamworks)