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COPERNICUS
Null
 NEVERMORE

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"COME LUNCH WITH THE MONSTER! Let's eat the authorities," Copernicus exhorts the audience at a West Berlin club. And his band whumps up a big Quasimodo noisefest, and a week later the Berlin Wall is knocked down. Word sound have power, the dub poets say.

Null is the fourth album from the Ragging Bull of Brooklyn, his first in three years. (He was touring Europe East and West a lot in between.) I can't say it's my fave, though the seven tracks do most of the things we've come to expect from the ranting rock poet. Maybe it's the expectedness that's taking some of the edge off for me. Still, the only other stuff quite like this is Copernicus' other stuff; he's out there in a universe of his own making. There's the big jazz-rock jam-fest of "Ra," 11 minutes of Saharan sandstorm with 18 musicians whirling around an Egyptoid theme and Copernicus bull-roaring spontaneous poetics full of references to Luxor and Karnak and Abu Simbel. It's loud and chaotic and capers madly on a thin line between the profound and the ridiculous, like all of Copernicus' most inspired work. The quieter "The Sound of



LONG MAY HE RAVE

Copernicus rages again on Null.

the Mind" is just a synthesizer environment where Copernicus lets his stream of consciousness flood its banks, making a free-association dreamscape where there are "guard dogs biting the tears of blood of the odor of passion," and "robots march to the yellow past," and "flowers stare and move through the wind and tell their stories like a dog walking through human streets." The tighter, stripped-down rock-poetry attacks of "The Authorities" and "Dah! Dah! Doh!" from the Berlin gig thump pretty convincingly. The extravagant 16-minute "Touch" is a rambling lost-in-space opera where atom bombs and Jesus Christ, Chopin and nightclub jazz and a bunch of overdubbed Copernici screaming and muttering his "Nothing Exists" philosophy all wander through synthesizer and tape-looped mists without ever quite connecting. "Aw, humanity, you did your best," he sighs at the end of it. Same to you, Joe. (POB 170150, Brooklyn NY 11217.)

John Strausbaugh