

PRESS REVIEWS OF COPERNICUS' "NO BORDERLINE"

CMJ NEW MUSIC REPORT
GREAT NECK, NY

...Almost a full 10 years after he first boldly declared that "nothing exists," and fervently proclaimed that all mankind is descended from bacteria, poet/prophet/seer **COPERNICUS** has returned with another spoken-word/improvised music opus entitled **No Borderline** (Nevermore, P.O. Box 170150, Brooklyn, NY 11217).

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COPERNICUS

No Borderline

(Nevermore, Inc.)

Box 170150, Brooklyn NY 11217

On his fifth recording, New York-based artist Copernicus tames some of the scarniness and excessiveness that have typified his performances since the early '80s and pared himself down to burning up the mike, backed by atmospheric soundscapes and trim jazz-rock/ambient arrangements. Think of this as his best-of album—reunising a number of tracks and reinterpreting them with lighter instrumentation—and lots of impeccably-rendered new live-improv tracks.

It is a bleak vision of a world in chains, minds in chains (a bit of L. Ron Hubbard in that), the tortures of Art and a cold cosmos of harsh, unforgiving—well, high crue—events that have no sequence or consequence. Just your typical user-friendly-nihilism-meets-Euro-existentialism in whispers, growls, and cannonades. But it's a hell of a ride.

See, there's a lot to like among his mix-and-match texts of bare-Beat/anarcho-New-Age/science-friction-mulligan-stew rant-a-togs. "There Was No" finds him reestyling in Berlin backed by BIX, an utterly smoking Lithuanian ska band that manages to put this near early Pink Floyd. You could say that "In Terms of Money II" could be rightly reckoned his "Purple Rain" (with singer/composer Pierce Turner providing the ecstatic vocal). The shortest (arguably, best) number is "Break from the Senses"—a londa cascading avalanche/sermon with star accents.

If there was a narrative structure, you might compare Copernicus to a melodramatic Nick Cave (sans rock's 4/4 and junkie/sex appeal). But if you just want your head ripped off, filled with sand, and put back on with a staple gun, this might be your substitute.

I should preface this by saying the last time I confronted Copernicus in person was to find out about BIX, when it was playing NMS a buncha years back. During our discussion, he proceeded to go from affable intoxication and urbanity into raging dementia, taking



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one of my Cuban cigars, giving me a hundred-dollar bill, and rattling me by my jacket lapels to try to wake me up to the fact of his teleological weltanschauung. Which is why this was done on the phone.

Hey. I don't know anyone who's not a little nuts.

Explain your philosophy of "nothing exists." Does it mean that everything is an illusion, from the breaths we draw to Clinton's health care plan?

That's right.

Then you interpret the Heisenberg uncertainty principle as saying that since the observer and the observed are inextricably intertwined, there is no such thing as empirical, independently verifiable evidence of existence?

Uhhh... I don't know what you just said, but what I'm saying is everything's made of atoms and you can't see all that atomic changes taking place from moment to moment with your senses and you can't perceive it with your senses. So, to say that what your senses perceive is real is wrong. Your senses are not saying anything. It's like the bull when he comes into the bullring. The bull is almost, basically, blind, and all he can perceive is movement. So you can be standing right in front of him and, if you don't move, you're okay. And that's how the bullfighter controls the bull: He just snakes the

cape a little bit and the bull goes to the moving cape. And so we're as blind as the bull. Well, that's our relationship to reality; we're the same thing.

A lot of people would say that your message is pretty bleak. Do you believe in hope?

Bleak? What is "bleak?" "Bleak?" Copernicus is the most positive thing in the world! What is bleak? I'd say people who walked around and believed in an illusion, those are the bleak people. People who don't care about truth; people who care about lies.... All of the people you see... in magazines, who defy these people who talk about, defy the world of illusion. These are the bleak people! Famous stars—all these people goin' aroun' talkin' junk; those are the bleak people!

So, if being hopeful is struggling to find out what's true, I don't see that as bleak.

What do you do when the landlord comes around? You realize you have to exist in a capitalist materialist world, don't you?

No. You don't have to. Every moment of your life you express whatever the forces within you call on you to do. Whatever that comes together and tells you you have to do, you should do.

So how do you pay the rent?

It all depends on what the forces within you call upon you to do at that moment. It may be to work a 9-to-5 job; it may be to be a doctor, or it may be to live in the woods. Or anything, I don't know. But you have to follow that voice. You don't have to have a landlord. You don't have to work a 9-to-5 job. You don't have to have anything. You're free.

What's your idea of a good time?

A good time is the full expression of what you are at any moment, and that should be the definition of life. Every moment of your life should be the fullest expression of what you are. That's a good time. When the energy flowing into you is flowing right out again. That's heaven. I've always said that life is heaven. Besides, when I'm cooking on stage, it's wonderful. I don't think there's anything better than that for me.

(Then again, Maybe he ain't so crazy.)

—interview and review by Carle VP Groom