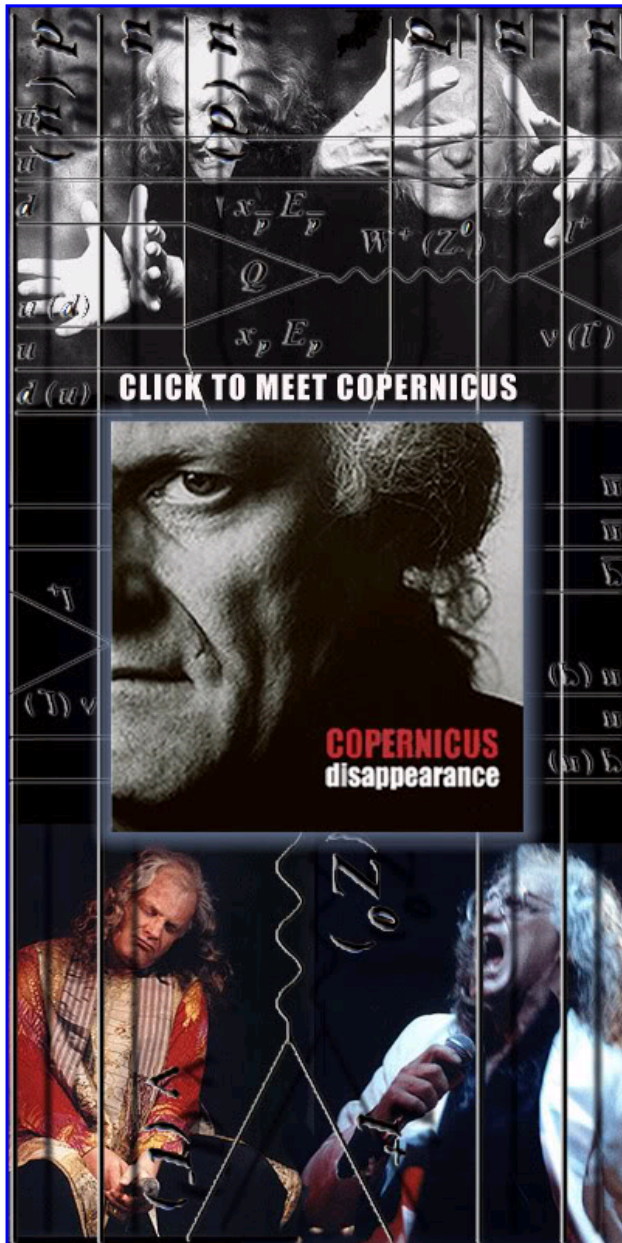


Songs of Subatomic Praise for a Quantum Chorus

band: [Copernicus](#)

Album: *disappearance*



Copernicus "disappearance" Songs of Subatomic Praise

"Physics is like sex. Sure, it may give some practical results, but that's not why we do it."

- Richard Feynman

"Man is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short it is a synthesis. A synthesis is a relation between two factors. So regarded, man is not yet a self."

~ from "The Sickness Unto Death" by Søren Kierkegaard written under the pseudonym Anti-Climacus

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Joseph Smalkowski is a performance artist and poet from the New York rock 'n' roll scene. Copernicus is Joe the poet's conceptual creation who has been hurt into poetry by the despair of the twice divided universe described in current physics. Copernicus the character has been driven into apparent madness by the irresistible force of curiosity hurled at the speed of certainty into the immovable, hardwired, instinctual wall of self-preservation. He has contracted a wicked case of Kierkegaard's "Sickness Unto Death" without a God to reconcile his Copernicus with his Smalkowski, his "I am" with "what have I done?", *id* with *ego*, or quark with cosmos. This new physics has spurred some into a blissful doctrine beginning with the question "What the Bleep do we know?!" and then offering a misunderstanding of Carl Jung, Hinduism, and Buddhism in a quantum mysticism worthy of ridicule as the logical equivalent of Eric Von Danigan's "Chariots of the Gods." Smalkowski does no such weak witted parlor trick. The genius of Smalkowski's Copernicus is in his unqualified acceptance and primal response to quantum physics as doctrine. The names and numbers of particles and forces of the quantum are reduced to a litany and a liturgy as incomprehensible and holy as the Latin Mass. Copernicus is reduced and expanded with each paradoxical concept in the new physics, frightened and empowered, confused and clarified. He shouts praises to the subatomic particles, five carriers, and four forces. His tortured and sometimes ecstatic utterance is as terrifying and entertaining as a manic combination of William Burroughs, Professor Irwin Corey, Richard P. Feynman, and Brother Theodore.

The performance poet Joe Smalkowski finds his soul lost in the ocean of uncertainty born of numbers with no room in the equation for doubt or existence. The power of the new paradigm is like a character in a cartoon frantically grabbing a tree to hang sideways upon hearing that the earth is spinning at 1,000 miles per hour with the caption, "I'd never noticed that before." The accepted wisdom of paradoxical quantum physics has separated Joe the practical poet who does his taxes from the "conceptual creation" known to the world as Copernicus. So regarded, to borrow from Kierkegaard's "Sickness Unto Death," Copernicus is not yet a self.

Copernicus is blinded by science into accepting the immaculate misconception that he does not exist. If nothing exists, where did it go? Not existing really sucks when you aren't used to it! He has a tantric tantrum ranting in fine phrases, repeating the holy names and numbers that lead him nowhere, and generally acts out the grief for never having been with nowhere to go. His despair is very entertaining with a catchy soundtrack "created spontaneously and instantly by the musicians" though of course a true improviser must only play once. Copernicus takes the intellectual plunge into nothingness through stages of grief from denial to acceptance like a man newly blind morning the disappearance of everything. We get to laugh at him for this is the comedy so long as it is happening to somebody else. Of course, for those of us who accept the conclusions of new physics without doing the math, this is The Divine Comedy and this rant sticks where it hurts because nothing exists and that includes you, Smartass! If it's happening to you, then it's a tragedy.

The joy of the journey while listening to this MoonJune/Nevermore release called "disappearance" is the humor of watching this Copernicus tortured by pain after slipping on the banana peel of a proof for the Big Nothing. It's fun to watch the Pig think, when Potso removes his hat in Godot, and this Copernicus has the same bacon frying on the hot plate in his head. The crisis and catharsis, pleading and arrogant ranting you hear is not your own voice or even Joe Small (to coin a nick), but poor Copernicus is just Joe Small's cosmic jester with a quantum gesture. Ask not for whom the Golden Bow has broken, believe me you don't want to know. Just enjoy and laugh at the madman. It's cool man. It will all be over in 1.2 hours. Relax! You are who you think you are, it's not you howling over all that pretty music. You will return to the flat world whole in your exalted self secure in the knowledge the universe spins around your earth like a canopy with holes in everything -- that's how the light gets in. Laugh or the joke is you.

The namesake astronomer Copernicus (Cop #1) was not the first man to discover the earth was a small satellite about the Sun. He just wouldn't shut up about it, and it sure did make us feel kinda small. He was a loudmouth who knew stuff,

wrote it down, and went around telling things against the comfy doctrine of another time. Worse than that, people listened to him who didn't have a clue why he was right but liked to argue with priests and the powers that be. Cop #1 was persecuted for insulting the prevailing ignorance. Joe Small's creation has been blinded by science and the doctrine of things he believes to be true since those guys use math. It happened on the road to poetry, at 3:23 p.m. and Joe became Copernicus II, with all the paranoia and arrogance of the original astronomer of the same name. Joe is a cagey man. He gets the cosmic joke. Though it may be irrefutable that all creation is built from twelve quarks and four forces with five carriers, Cop #2 accepts all the science he can memorize into his philosophy as blindly as any convert to a new religion. It's a comedy! The music is your clue. There's no math in this equation, no meat between the buns, no hummus in the hubris, nothing of substance here, walk on by, nothing to see, we've got it all under control. The story here is an existential Little Tramp trying to eat his shoe to fill the void, broken by what he believes but doesn't understand in search of a self and eternity as a bonus. Look at the signifying monkey, but don't get too close.

I admit before this audience that I truly have some whacky spiritual feelings when I hear the conclusions without the quadratic equations from Richard Feynman in his 1962 introduction to physics lectures. I feel religious about it. The music on this disc seems to know what I felt. It's like a jazz funeral procession in New Orleans, gospel without a God, or that one time taking drugs to make reality melt just for fun. Hey, look what I can feel! Pierce Turner is the musical director, keyboard Merlin, secondary voice, and hitter of things that make noise on this disc. Pierce is a co-conspirator improvising context on the pretext of texture with a little help from some talented friends. Divorced of the rant, this album is gospel, cool jazz, country and other forms of Americana or arkana or whatever. The sounds on this disc are comfort food laced with bitter poetry from the inside of the outside. The words on a page would make you think and rethink and think again and piss you off in the repetition. The dramatic performance of this text by Copernicus tells the story of a man on the verge of a nervous breakthrough.

"Don't eat them! They're your forefathers. Nothing exists. Nothing exists. Nothing exists. Long live the quark gluon Plasma!"
~ from **"Poor Homo Sapiens"** by Copernicus

Copernicus sets things straight with the revelations of "REVOLUTION !!" The poet sums up with an emotional retelling of what we know we are not, and a jeering pigheaded arrogant egocentric squeal of a disappearing man. "An extraordinary creature like myself would not be created to rot in the earth! WRONG!" The revolution is an acceptance of our place in the universe according to the modest proposal of logic and math that nothing exists, nothing can remain the same from one moment to the next. "Human ego -- an invention based on millions of years of ignorance -- is not part of the equation. Sorry!" When Copernicus calls for revolution, there is a meandering murky pool of jazz like an orchestra warming up. Copernicus in misery seeks company. He wants us all to join him in a movement of nonexistence. The revolution here may be a complete 360. We are back where we started when we didn't know nothing, and didn't know how we knew, or who was knowing what we didn't know. Key phrase: "It's only a matter of the mind. It's only a matter of the mind. You don't know the whole story." All it takes to achieve a psychic break with reality is to believe what the scientists tell you without getting there yourself, then sit there in your own void and stew for an hour and a half. That's nutty nutty stuff. I'm nothing and everything. I am he as you are he as you are me and we are all together. I'm frying and it was all done with words and sounds. No brain cells were harmed in the creation of this reality. What does it feel like not to exist? Be the first on your block to find out for yourself. Buy "disappearance" by Copernicus at fine music stores near you. Not available at Walmart. As an exploration of physics and the nature of the self, this performance is as practical as a spelling bee conducted by email. As an exploration of mankind in the throws of a doctrine trying to find a self, it's first rate entertainment I can dance to. I give it a 12, with five kudos carrying four gold stars.

"The universe is not only stranger than we know, but it is stranger than we can know."

~ attributed to J.B.S. Haldane, Aldus Huxley, Aurther C. Clarke, Forest Sawyer, Muktananda, and a host of others across the Internets near you.



COPERNICUS IS:

COPERNICUS: poetry, lead vocals, keyboards

PIERCE TURNER: musical director, Hammond B3 organ, acoustic piano, vocals, percussion

Mike Fazio: electric guitar

Bob Hoffnar: steel guitar

Raimundo Penaforte: viola, acoustic guitar, cavaquinho, percussion, vocals

Cesar Aragundi: electric & acoustic guitar

Fred Parcells: trombone

Rob Thomas: violin

Matty Fillou: tenor saxophone, percussion

Marvin Wright: bass guitar, electric guitar, percussion

George Rush: tuba, contrabass, bass guitar

Thomas Hamlin: drums, percussion

Mark Brotter: drums, percussion

James Frazee: recording & mixing engineer