

Nothing Exists

Copernicus

Nevermore Records - NCD2085

Available from [Moonjune Records](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange
by **Mark S. Tucker**
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Copernicus is one of the most eccentric and intelligent musicians this country has spawned in the last so many decades. That his work has nearly languished and even been badly disserved by such now-defunct magazines as OPTion (the then-trendy brainchild of Richie Unterberger and Scott Becker), the composer-performer has persisted and issued a number of highly artistic discs, even a written exegesis upon his own cosmic philosophy, a tome not unlike zen meets Terence McKenna, Rupert Sheldrake, Ken Wilbur, and Nisargadatta Maharaj for dinner at the restaurant at the end of the universe. This CD reissue of his seminal LP, now released on the entirely appropriate MoonJune label, makes a new bid to reclaim a place in the avant-Valhalla that should have made C's name a benchmark long ago.

I appended "performer" to his musical nom du guerre because Copernicus is an extension of the Living Theater, with whom he was once interpolated, and any concert given by the raving, cajoling, seducing, admonishing singer is an adventure in theater as well. Anyone familiar with his *Live in Prague* VHS (1989) knows this well. Not that it's necessary to actually see the gent prowling the stage, however, because the music more than imbues the listener with precisely what's inherent, and audiences are taken on a tour of the human psyche whether ensconced in a live venue, a living room—or even a cave.

Pierce Turner and Copernicus, Joseph Smallkowski by birth, have a long-drawn affection and respect for one another that manifested quite well here and has not diminished over many years...and it will surprise more than a few that Jimmy (Jimi) Zhivago, lately appearing on Chris Riffle's ([here](#)) and Libby Johnson's ([here](#)) superb CDs, was a member of the anarchic spontaneous ensemble flanking this extemporaneous poet. In point of fact, that's one of the unique elements in Copernicus' work: he vastly prefers of-the-moment inspiration and the danger of the unrehearsed to cushiony charts and preset invention. Thus, huge swaths of the psychedelic, avant-garde, and freeflowing jazz appear everywhere, leavened with rock, the result dripping off the walls, baking the paving stones, permeating the air.

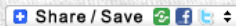
When I wrote for Perfect Sound Forever, Copernicus kindly agreed to a long interview and the result was fascinating. Of all the talks I've conducted, his and Michael Mantler's were the most unusual (Tomasz Stanko would come in third). I suggest that those interested in altered consciousness read it, as his comments and articulations make for a stream of thought not very often encountered...then get his book and really blow your mind. From this CD, though, and from experiencing his work thereafter, one can trace a course of rage, bliss, delirium, frustration, satiety, and wonder worked into artistic form, finally ending up in the mellifluously light-imbued *Immediate Eternity*, his last release and the capstone to 26 years of recorded marvels. I hardly know what to expect next, but I do know this: if progrock, the avant-garde, free-form music, whatever you want to call it has ever had a Richard Burton—crossed, of course, with Bukowski, Kerouac, and the non-deviant aspects of de Sade—it's Copernicus.

Track List:

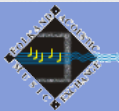
- I Won't Hurt You
- Blood
- I Know What I Think
- Quasimodo
- Let Me Rest
- Nagasaki
- Atomic Nevermore

All songs written by Copernicus.

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