



Live! in Prague

Copernicus

Nevermore, Inc. - NDVD01 (DVD)

Available from [Copernicus's online store](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange
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I've made no secret of my opinion of the raneur Copernicus as an artistic genius, a kinesthetic allsorts whose mind is in constant ferment and whose entablatures form a continuation of the Living Theater, of the theater of the absurd (which, as fans of Ubu and Ionesco well know, is actually the American Mumonkan), of paranoid critical existentialism, and the djinns and dakinis themselves only know what else. Of all the interviews I've ever conducted, the dialogue with Copernicus ranks with my tet a tets with Michel Mantler and Kevin Kastning as one of the most satisfying so far conducted (and can be read at Perfect Sound Forever). But this MoonJune re-issuance of a rare VHS is on the order of a godsend and the only chance you're going to get to see just how the boiling tempest that is Copernicus actually fleshes out his performance-based craft.

The year was the middle season of 1989, and of course none but the Europeans would've had the aesthetic wherewithal to invite the man to perform, in this case in Prague, though Moscow, Berlin, and other locales were equally enthusiastic during a far-ranging tour. In fact, growing opposition to what is still called "communism" (and never has been anything of the sort) was fueling resentment and fervor, and every "communist" city that the band visited fell from totalitarianism not long after the Copernicus performances, an ironic string of coincidences. In a new short voiceover not available on the old VHS version, Smallkowski (Joseph Smallkowski, the gent's birth name) speaks of this and other matters.

The venue in Prague was a medium-sized indoor sports theater of some kind, and it was packed out. In America, Copernicus would have a tough time selling out a miniscule shithole like The Whiskey, but Europe? Hordes show up, and from the first line ("I've always been in trouble with the authorities") of the opening song, the reason why is obvious: anarchy and rebellion against The Machine. The band sets up a swirling psychedelic sonic backdrop, and Copernicus sets to the task, a campaign against consensus reality. He roams the stage like a caged tiger, pounding the floorboards, pointing to heaven while shouting "There is no authority!!" before dropping into a restrained philosophical mode in *White from Black* that soon becomes agonized lament. Wild-haired, scowling, arrayed in costume blends that look culled from an Andy Warhol flick by way of Zatoichi, the enraged avatar is a naked lone wolf.

No one does what Copernicus does. He's not a man who is an artist but an artist who is a man, and all his beyond-the-pale perceptions and declamations aren't exercises in Socratic disquisition, they're what he actually is. The damburst pours forth in torrents—sometimes whispering, often fulminating—while the band paints galaxies and starfields, playgrounds for an unrestrained mentality stalking through neural nets and synapses. Though the recitals are unsettling to the status quo and even to rebels ("Kill the gringos! Shoot them to death!" and "At one time, all humans were black!"), the audience takes them all in and demands more.

During this late 80s time period, arch-dickheads Scott Becker and Richie Unterberger, co-publishers of OPTion magazine, commissioned a character assassination piece on Copernicus, something which pretty much emblemized the mindset of shallow bourgeois American smarminess, but just one glance at this DVD shows why they might do so, intimidated, sniping from distant bournes: Copernicus challenges the complacencies of the ilk of pseudo-outside critic mentalities like Unterberger's (who went on to become a writer—Christ only knows what happened to his idiot cohort) have ever favored. The Europeans understood this only too well and welcomed the Cassandran in for that caravanserai of elegant explosions. And if you'd care to surpass them in daring, just get ahold of Copernicus' consciousness expanding book of cosmic philosophy, *Immediate Eternity*, and read it.

Track List:

- The Authorities!
- White from Black
- Oh God!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- In Terms of Money
- Chichen-Itza Elvis
- From Bacteria
- Nagasaki
- Blood
- They Own Everything

All vocals created by Copernicus,
all music created by Kirwan / Fazio / Hamlin / Conrad.

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