



Copernicus

Victim of the Sky

Review by G. W. Hill

I like Copernicus. He's certainly not for everyone, but his type of art turned music is cool. He's basically a performance artist who speaks, screams and (as this set attests) sometimes sings over music that falls into an experimental progressive rock vicinity. Fans of things like the spoken bits from Hawkwind and Gong should like this. He had a big following in the punk rock scene, too, and this fits into the more artistic side of that. His band included Larry Kirwan of Black 47 fame, and one track here features Kirwan's vocals. This might well be my favorite disc from Copernicus.

Track by Track Review

Lies

As Copernicus speaks, freeform stuff goes on in the background. It's mostly just rhythmic, but there are other elements, too. It's just a short track.

The Wanderer

Copernicus almost sings on this, but also seems to channel Jim Morrison at times. There's almost a country vibe to his vocals, too. The music is less freeform than on the opening number, but builds very slowly providing mostly atmospheric sounds.

Victim of the Sky

There is a sultry, jazzy, funky vibe and rhythmic element running in the background as this thing builds. It's sort of like Copernicus pulling a James Brown. There's also a bit of a Roxy Music element to the tune. Comparisons to the Talking Heads wouldn't be completely out of the question, either. Later, though, the music drops away and Copernicus starts shouting over percussion. It calls to mind some Hawkwind stuff.

White from Black

Weirdness builds gradually, again making me think of Hawkwind. Then a church organ sound rises up as this keeps evolving. It's noisy, yet quiet and the bass has a real jazz element to it. I particularly like Copernicus' recitations here. The music does a great job of coalescing to create a suitable soundtrack for his story. A female voice rises up later. More Hawkwind-like weirdness takes it out.

Not Him Again!

Noisy weirdness with a driving percussion and vocals that are sometimes sped up, this has a real punk rock meets Hawkwind feeling to it. It's weird, but also very cool.

Desperate

With Larry Kirwan singing, this tune really feels like a Black 47 song. It's got a cool reggae meets Celtic vibe and is a nice change. Copernicus spits out his statement a couple times later in the piece.

In Terms of Money

There's a cool jazz vibe (mostly from the bass) combined with something closer to Pink Floyd as this tune works through. I love the theme of "don't ever measure my life in terms of money." There is some great musical evolution going on here. It really does grow and the echoey vocals add to the mix.

From Bacteria

This is very free form and weird. It's got a lot in common with some of the stranger Hawkwind rants. The music that wanders in the background at times seems about to coalesce, but then fades into chaos again. As odd as this is, it's also compelling. It's like performance art.

The Lament of Joe Apples

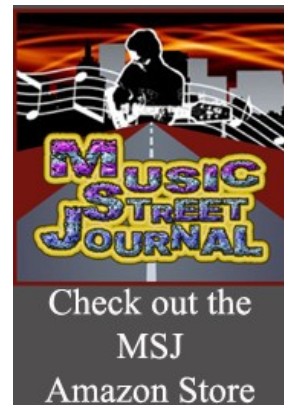
Copernicus starts this without any accompaniment. Somehow he sounds like Robin Williams combined with Ralph Cramden to me as he rants. Music starts to come up gradually in the background, very sparse and freeform. He portrays someone named "Joe Apples" who is rambling to his kids. This one certainly earns a parental advisory. This is very long (over nine minutes) and the music doesn't really rise up beyond just some background noise level.

Victim Reprise

As labeled, this is a spacey revisit to the title track. It's short, echoey and nicely weird.



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