

Brainwashed - Throbbing Gristle, "Gristleism"

Written by John Kealy

Sunday, 06 December 2009 14:50 - Last Updated Monday, 07 December 2009 00:44



The original FM3 Buddha Machines appear to have struck a chord with the members of Throbbing Gristle (a number of them appearing in some of Chris Carter's gear photos on his Flickr account) so it is no surprise that they have created their own version with the help of Christian Virant. Containing 13 loops from the TG arsenal and redesigned to look far more stylish than previous models, *Gristleism* is a slimmed down Buddha with teeth.

[Industrial Records](#)

Among the original aims of TG was the attempt to make music as an industrial process, hence the name of the record label and the business-like presentation of *The Second Annual Report of Throbbing Gristle*: "We churn out records like Ford make motor cars." With the aid of Virant, TG have further pushed themselves into the realms of art as a product; these machines can be churned out in much the same way as Ford's cars. Assembled and packed out from a real factory (as opposed to TG's Death Factory), this is a very logical step for TG. However, unlike most businesses, Industrial Records credit the workers who do the actual assembly on the inner sleeve. This small detail casts a mirror up to large multinationals that use the labor of people in the developing world but tries to keep that far from their public profile.

As to the actual contents of the little plastic box, each of the 13 loops contains the basic DNA for TG classics like "Twenty Jazz Funk Greats" and "Industrial Info." The loop from "Persuasion" provides a sufficient amount of the song to create your own karaoke version. The speaker packs enough punch to fill the room and like the second Buddha Machine, *Gristleism* also includes a pitch control. This pitch control seems to have a larger range of available speeds compared to the Buddha Machine's, allowing for a greater range of sounds. "Hamburger Lady" is sounds queasy enough on record but altering the speed of the loop on *Gristleism* gives the music an even more uneasy edge.

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The only drawback with *Gristleism* is the lack of a headphone output socket which means that the player cannot be used straight from the box as part of a live electronics rig or even as a personal player like the previous versions. However, Carter has included two pdf documents on the [Gristleism site](#) for those handy with a soldering iron to install their own output jack. This is unfortunately beyond my non-existent electronics skills but hopefully I can find some kind soul to do it for me. There is also no power input to use electricity from the mains as opposed to batteries but as I've never used this on either of FM3's Buddha Machines, I have not missed it here.

Despite the dangers of this being perceived as mere band wagon jumping by TG onto the success of the Buddha Machine, *Gristleism* has turned out to be something really special and with so many of TG's tracks suited to this format, I can only hope that they put out a second version; "What a Day", "United" and "Walkabout" all instantly spring to mind as being perfect candidates for a second *Gristleism*. Although hopefully a headphone jack could be included.