

Brainwashed - Peter Christopherson: The Million Dollar Altar

Written by Grant Regnaert and Paul Ferguson

Tuesday, 29 August 2006 16:00 - Last Updated Thursday, 25 November 2010 10:12



Coil's final studio album, *The Ape of Naples*, filled a void left for many of us after Jhonn Balance's death. As long-time fans, we chose to go directly to the source in order to find out about the magick behind this memorial piece. To obtain this in-depth interview, we exchanged emails throughout the first half of 2006 with a much patient Peter Christopherson, aka Sleazy.

Interview with Peter (Sleazy) Christopherson [PC]
By Grant Regnaert [GR] and Paul Ferguson [PF]



[GR] *The Ape Of Naples* flows very beautifully from start to finish. Could you tell me how you feel about the album overall?

[PC] It's hard, if not impossible, for me to separate the album from the context in which it was made. Songs from the New Orleans era which HAD not seemed to have "found their time" suddenly took on a completely new aspect, because of Jhonn's death. Miraculously, they changed, morphed, in front of my eyes, and I had numerous 'oh my god—THAT's what that's about' revelatory moments. I imagine everyone does, listening to the album knowing what happened, in a way.

Considering how far apart in time some of the songs were written, I think it is amazing how coherent the album sounds—guess that must be because the Coil 'style' if such a thing exists in the field of music we make, is pretty solid and enduring.

I still find it hard to listen to the whole album all the way through without getting a lump in my throat. Actually I've cried so much in the last year or so, that tears come VERY easily to me now, I'm glad to say, so the 'lump' is usually washed away very quickly.

The small army of Thai lads who I keep around the house, just to look pretty or handsome or to pander to my every whim, no matter how outlandish or perverted, or whatever, always think it's hysterical when I start blubbing watching *Lord of the Rings*, or *Peter Pan*, or some even wetter film I would be too embarrassed to mention!

To answer the question, I don't think I could have done it any better, so in that sense I feel

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fulfilled, and am sure Jhonn would feel so, too.

[GR] As fans we are looking at the album from an objective point of view. But when you are working so closely to something, having your hands directly in the mixing bowl, so to speak, you obviously tend to look from a very subjective point of view. Hindsight is 20/20 of course, but if there was anything that you could go back and change, would you, why, and what would that be?

[PC] There are always technical things one gets bothered by. Looking back I wish we'd had a better recording—even a multitrack—of the last show in Dublin. On most of the proper Coil tours we took a sound guy and some kind of multitrack computer or device to record the shows cleanly, but the Dublin gig was a one off, unfortunately, and was not properly recorded.

Jhonn's vocals on *Going Up* are taken from the ambient mic on a fan's dv camera, who happened to be shooting the show from way back across the hall (which was a circular stone mausoleum and had ghastly acoustics anyway), and consequently they are not very good quality. It was a struggle to get as much out of the recording as I did... but I had to try, obviously, on account of the importance of that final moment.

That show was the one and only time Jhonn thought of and sang those words... His own epitaph if you like.

I hope to mix and edit a version of the show for the forthcoming dvd boxset but haven't got to it yet. There's a couple of other new songs that were performed there for the first time, that are almost as 'perfect' but I just didn't have enough audio to make album-quality versions of them...

[GR] Was this the first time you have ever produced a Coil release without Jhonn Balance? If so, how did it feel to do so on your own?

[PC] This record was not produced without him :-)

Having said that, it was nice not to have him taking the piss out of me for adding more Boy's Choirs, like he used to!

[GR] The last two tracks on *The Ape of Naples* ("Amber Rain" and "Going Up") seem to be favorites among a lot of Coil fans. These last two tracks, especially "Going Up," are the perfect ending to such a perfect album. How do you feel about them? And how did the decision come about to use the theme of a British sit-com (*Are You Being Served*) for "Going Up"?

[PC] I wrote the backing track for "Amber Rain" in London in 1994 or 5, directly after *Love's*

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Secret Domain

came out. The vocal and the "guitar solo" (which in fact I played on a Nord (I think)) were recorded in New Orleans whenever that was. Mike York added the deduk track using an instrument he had handmade specially, and Simon (Ossian) the synths—esp. the 'rubber' squeak noise at the end—in the spring of 2005 at the North Tower.

When I was mixing it, I ALMOST missed Jhonn's last line "how life just trickled through my hand..." completely, as it was on a separate track with different timing—I think maybe only on a quick guide vocal recorded earlier, but fortunately it popped up, and in, at the last moment....

It was Jhonn's idea to do "Going Up," and to get Ian's friend Francois, whose voice he loved but I hadn't heard till he came to our studio one day, to sing the words. He did a beautiful job recording three or four takes at most.

Jhonn who spent most of those months in his last year drunk in bed, sobered up specially that morning to 'direct' Francois' recording and although he said he loved Francois' performance, he seemed strangely non-plussed, put out, by what he heard, and even before Francois was gone, retreated into his room and the comfort of vodka...

Apart from the short looped sample of the TV theme at the beginning, the melody was written by me from scratch in summer 2004. At first Jhonn was uncertain about the "pygmy style" funeral chants but grew to like them over the relatively few times we played the song together...

Of course the original theme-tune did not contain any of the more complex overtones or interpretation given to it in the Coil version. Jhonn and I had joked about "Going Upstairs" as a funny euphemism for dying, for years.

Hearing the list of departments as though described by a lift operator in the vocal, now always makes me think of Jhonn's love of acquisition. When he died we had rooms full of carrier bags of stuff he had bought but never unpacked (fortunately mostly from charity shops and car boot sales, not Prada). But this acquisition in some way here reversed, as though as he "goes UP" he is LETTING GO of his need for these material objects, the last of which to go is simply "teas"...

[GR] The melody of the first track, "Fire Of The Mind," seems very familiar deja-vu sense as if heard from somewhere before. We know the track was originally written, recorded and produced by Coil and Danny Hyde over 10 years ago at Trent Reznor's Nothing Studios. What is the particular story behind this new track?

[PC] It does date from back then, indeed. If it sounds familiar perhaps its because substantially different versions of the song, MP3s etc, leaked into the public domain over the 10 years or so, via Internet sites etc. and fan lists... Some early versions had a more electronic rhythm track as well.

I think the origin of the track was a session we did with some Irish bodrun players that were friends of Danny's (sadly uncredited—I just couldn't remember their names and in fact not much

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of their playing remains on this version). As they were playing, I added the basic hand organ drone sequence, and later Jhonn added the "noise" guitar and vocals, again in New Orleans I think.

It is one of the few (if not the only) Coil song actually to approach a verse/chorus structure, which emerged by my editing, repeating and overlaying of multiple versions Jhonn's "holy" lines, that had been more randomly placed when he first recorded them. We were in some debate about whether the word "holy" would have (negative) Christian connotations, but Jhonn was happy, and double-tracked he sounded great so we kept it.

Originally there was one more verse which went (I think) "There are hounds beneath the pylons, Guardians of the sirens" but when mixing I felt that the song was stronger and more succinct like it is on the album.

Thighpaulsandra played the accordion-sounding instrument in Spring 05, and in doing so added a note to the harmony (possibly by accident or just as a variation one time) which I loved. It was an E natural or something—which totally changed the mood of the song for me. Previously the piece had always sounded a bit desperate or lonely, and by just adding this one note, it turned into something much more wistful and 'accepting of ones fate', so I got him to play that extra 'sweet-note' as part of his harmony throughout the song.

That's one of the things about music that fascinates me most—how combinations of basic mathematical frequencies take on such extraordinary emotional power and suggest such meaning. I mean, how do—what are basically just sequences of vibrating tones at certain specific numeric values—make us all feel like they do? And not only that but why do we all, regardless of our cultural or ethnic origins, hearing a certain chord or tone, feel the more or less the same? I guess Jhonn was right: Angels ARE mathematical, after all.

[GR] There is a new version of a classic Coil song from 15 years ago called "Teenage Lightning 2005." What made you decide to choose that particular song to re-work

[PC] We had been playing this version of the song live for about a year. I can't remember right now which gig we introduced it at—Paris maybe, or the Ocean in London. We always liked to do old songs in a set that consisted of a lot of new material, as long as we could bring something new to the original, and this as you know, is a major reworking—not much of the original remains at all, though you still sometimes get a waft of it "across a distant Burroughs-ian fairground...".

There are some samples in this new version that I stole from the radio, like the Hungarian gypsy boys' chants, but I messed with them substantially (the samples, not the boys) and I don't think they would recognize themselves in this...

[GR] How about the stellar version of "The Last Amethyst Deceiver" that was originally released in 1998?

[PC] "Amethyst" as it appeared live, had never been released in a "definitive" version. The track on *Moon's Milk* is completely different obviously. We had been playing it as part of the show in

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various incarnations, as long as we had been playing live—since 2001, so I felt had to 'close the book on it'.

I think the vocal was from a multitrack we had from our gig in Thessalonika Greece, and the backing from the (Ableton) Live set of the show (v 3 or 4).

[GR] What tracks off of *The Ape Of Naples* are you particularly fond of?

[PC] As to which tracks I'm fond of, if ANY were less than very dear to me they just wouldn't be there. I like all of them.

There were a few tracks from the New Orleans days that didn't make it to the album, precisely cos I was less fond of them, and probably they will be now seen as "lost"...but really it is no great loss!

There IS one called "The Million Dollar Altar," which has a vocal by Andy Warhol superstar Taylor Mead. Jhonn and I visited him in New York one time and, picking our way between the piles of old newspapers and cat shit that jammed his tiny apartment, managed to record this vocal. Subsequently we added music to it. Jhonn and I loved it, but it was so camp and flippant (and obscene) that it just didn't fit on the album, so that still might see the light of day, sooner or later—who knows?

[GR] Personally, my favorite superstar of Andy's was always Mary Woronov (one of the 3 former whip dancers), though it would be very interesting to hear that song with Taylor Mead sometime.

Many Coil fans are also still interested in hearing the full 60 minutes of "Acid Jam—Parts 1-5" as well as that album with the William S. Burroughs samples, which I believe is called "Wounded Galaxies Tap At The Window." At some point, are you still planning on (aside from the forthcoming DVD boxed set) releasing some more Coil rarities?

[PC] I don't know that I want to release any more Coil 'albums' as such, but I am hoping that the forthcoming Blu-ray format, which could technically hold the ENTIRE Coil catalog on a single disc, will become accepted as a medium for large quantities of audio as well as HDTV. If this happens there are a good number of tracks and other material that could be exclusive to that product...

[GR] Going back to *The Ape of Naples*, you had mentioned that Thighpaulsandra added a single note to "Fire Of The Mind", and how doing such a very minute thing can completely change the mood of the song, regardless of our cultural or ethnic origins. Could you tell us why you decided to shorten "Cold Cell", for example, from the original somber six-minute version, to the now beautifully done, yet still somber four-minute version?

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[PC] I felt the song had to be included because of the subject and just wanted the new version to be different, even though it used substantially the same elements that appeared before. I used to always add things and sometimes I think I over-complicate, so in this case (and indeed with most of this album) I decided to strip away—simple being better.

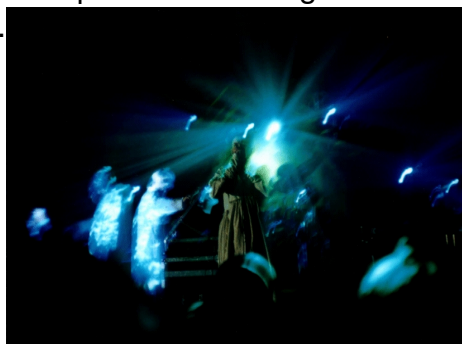


[GR] I also have the same question regarding "Triple Sun," as the original live version (from the live album, *...And The Ambulance Died In His Arms*) was a magnificent 14 minutes in length, while the album version is just under four minutes too. Yet, you manage to make it work so well. What was your reasoning on truncating this track?

[PC] To be honest I can't really remember why I included this track. I think as you rightly guess it was because although we had been playing it live for a year or so, there was no proper studio version—till this one.

The reason the version (indeed all the songs) on "ambulance" are so long, is that the ATP set took place shortly after Jhonn had had a series of alcohol driven psychotic episodes, "missing periods" lasting days at a time—the story he tells about losing it in the Marylebone Road is absolutely true. On the day of the show there was a feeling between me and Thighps that Jhonn might not get anything together vocally at all. I think it was largely ONLY because Ian had made Jhonn a dress to wear on stage, and was there "holding his hand" that he showed up and performed at all. By doing a set that was mainly longer low-key and new tracks, Jhonn was not under any pressure to meet any kind of previous standard or expectation...

As it turned out his genius came up with something wonderful and appropriate even though (or because) he was freaked out.



[GR] I am assuming that "Triple Sun" was NEVER recorded in the studio, is that correct?

[PC] Quite.

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[GR] I love the last minute and a half, where Jhonn's vocal loop "and I swallowed the one you bury" keeps repeating. Did you take that vocal sample from the April 4th 2003 show at All Tomorrows Parties? Or was that taken from somewhere else?

[PC] Yes it was... It was "Yew Berry" though I believe.

[GR] One track that many people have been commenting on as well, is the splendid "Heaven's Blade." I noticed that this four-minute track is not only truncated from the original seven-minute version off of the *Backwards* demos, but it is completely different; it almost sounds like two entirely different tracks. The original one, at least the one that has been floating around that I've heard, seems much more of a spaced-out, trippy, dance-oriented track that one might hear at a club. It was instrumental, yet you significantly changed it, added vocals and kept the same name. Could you please explain your reasons for changing the track so significantly, as you did, and keeping the same title for it as well, when you changed several of the other original track titles?

[PC] When we originally recorded "Heaven's Blade" in the early '90s it was indeed somewhat reminiscent of a Beloved-style club anthem. This was due entirely to Danny Hyde's considerable production and arrangement skills.

While Jhonn and I enjoyed the IDEA that Coil could sound like the Beloved, we found the reality of the demo version song beginning to bore us quite quickly—it was like it didn't have "enough Coil" in it—and also because it was potentially quite commercial, it had a kind of life of its own independent of us, which we both found annoying. Of all the *Backwards* tracks, that one caused us the most grief and anxiety—it was a bastard child somehow.

The vocals are from the same session though in both versions—just edited and mixed differently. So when it came to using this song at all, I knew I had to strip away all of that quality that we had found annoying. Danny had recorded so many catchy little parts that it was easy to make something new, yet still essentially Coil, as a base for Jhonn's vocals which (as with all the tracks) now took on new meaning.

[GR] The only track from the original sessions aside from "Cold Cell," that still appears to sound somewhat like its original form ("Spastiche") is "I Don't Get It." Could you please tell us a bit about that track and why you DID decide to change its name as well?

[PC] "Spastiche" was just a working title that Dan wrote on the multitrack box the first time we laid that track down, when Jhonn and I were both too tired to think of anything. Jhonn hated the title (and wasn't much keen on the track either to start with—esp after a long and rather discordant session with the muted trumpet player (another whose name I'm ashamed to say I have forgotten). The vocals were recorded in New Orleans—were they on the demo? I can't remember.

I've always been a sucker for that *film noir* sound, and I knew I wanted to use the track, so it

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was just a question of adding a bit more to make it more interesting. Thighps did an excellent job of taking it a bit further down that "Turner Classic Movies on ketamine" road.

[GR] One of the newer tracks, "Tattooed Man," was dedicated to Marc Almond, when it was played live in Jesi, Italy on June 11th 2004. Could you please explain the origin of this track? As it has such unique lyrics, it is almost somewhat "atypical" for a Coil song, it ALMOST sounds like something Edward Ka-spel (of the Legendary Pink Dots) might do, with the little "bouncy" melody and the lyrics as well.

[PC] I think it was written for *Black Antlers* but Jhonn was struggling to fit the words to my music so it didn't make it to that CD. He knew he wanted to sing those words but just not how he should do it. The backing came from a period when I was stealing a lot from the radio. It wasn't until he played it live a few times that he got used to it.

In most cases, I made fairly substantial modifications to those original 'stolen' samples and this worked out fine. In the case of "Tattooed Man" the loops are slowed right down and repitched from a South American samba track—but occasionally I fucked up and recognizable things leaked through. "Wraiths and Strays" from that time inadvertently used a recognizable sample from a track by King of Woolworths.

[GR] And does it have anything to do with Marc Almond specifically, as he has sung on a few Coil tracks in the past ("Slur", "Titan Arch", "Dark Age Of Love" etc.) ?

[PC] I believe its about Ian rather than Marc (Jhonn and Ian did have some of the same tattoos), but as with all of Jhonn's lyrics there is ambiguity everywhere. Of course the man lying down in a grave with the SAME tattoos was himself.

Despite being friends (off and on) for 20 years, Marc and Jhonn had been estranged for a few years as a consequence of some misunderstanding that was publicized on the internet—I dont know what exactly—and at the time of the Jesi show they had just gotten back in touch on a friendly basis. I think that's all there was to it.

[GR] I am assuming (obviously) that "It's In My Blood" was originally called "AYOR"? Why did you (again) change the name of the track, and how did this final version come to be?

[PC] The answer to this is 99% the same as "Heaven's Blade" above.

[GR] Peter, I also have noticed that around the mid-'90s, Coil began using (what was referred to as) "Sidereal Sound" Recordings. This was stated initially on the "Nasa Arab"/"First Dark Ride" 12" in 1994, and on a few other Coil recordings (i.e. Black Light District's *A Thousand Lights in a Darkened Room*). Though, I believe that I have not seen it printed on any Coil releases since around 1996 or so.

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I was talking with Danny (Hyde) today and he said that you would be the best person to ask about this process.

If I'm not mistaken, I believe the first Coil track to ever utilize this recording process, known as "Sidereal Sound," was the 1993 track "Baby Food" (which is one of my favorite Coil tracks), taken from the Sub Rosa compilation *Chaos In Expansion*, then later added onto Coil's *Unnatural History III*

Many people might not know that this term originated from the infamous occult artist Austin Osman Spare (whom I know Coil, especially Jhonn, was very fond of). I believe AOS originally used this "term," when he began painting Hollywood actors/stars in his own "distorted" view of them, so to speak.

Did Coil use this Sidereal Sound process for *The Ape of Naples*, and if so, could you please elaborate on this process? If the Sidereal Sound recording process was NOT used in the recording of *The Ape Of Naples*, could you still please explain this recording process in some detail: how it was used it on past releases and how it basically works?

[PC] You are correct in all these assumptions. Jhonn and I had a substantial collection of AOS works including several "hollywood portraits" in the style you describe.

Our use of the term however did not refer to a specific device or process but more to the INTENTION to make audio works that in some way came at you from odd angles or from unexpected viewpoints—filtering and messing with the quality of the sound to confound the listeners brain in subtle ways was the priority, rather than the melody or even the song itself.

A further part of this process of 'confounding the listeners expectations' came from the BELIEF listeners had that, since we had come up with this name, there was in fact something scientific going on, whereas in reality it was entirely subjective—the result of using commercially available software and hardware, albeit in unconventional ways.

[GR] *The Ape of Naples* artwork was magnificently done by Ian Johnstone. While many past classic Coil albums have beautiful artwork, a lot of which was done by Coil, as well as Steven Stapleton; this album's artwork seems to have a very different, almost "simple"(so to speak), yet beautiful approach to it. Could you please give us a little background about the artwork, as well as how Ian's art first came to grace this album?

[PC] Since the start of Jhonn and Ian's relationship (Oct 2003?) Jhonn was keen to collaborate with Ian on artistic projects of all sorts, and I certainly was grateful for this new source of inspiration and talent. After Jhonn's death, it was natural that since I was doing most of the work on the audio side, that Ian would become more involved with the graphics. The design for the

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cover went through several different concepts, including an image of an ape writing with a quill pen and ape hands praying, before we decided on the final image. The first pressing of the "Ape" album was manufactured in the UK and we were very unhappy with the quality of the package. It was recently repressed in Thailand and these are much better.

[GR] Since *Horse Rotorvator*, I believe Coil has not used a photograph to go along with a specific track. One gets the impression that most of Ian's photos are meant to accompany each track accordingly. Is this the case and how did this idea come about?

[PC] There is supposed to be a loose relationship between the songs and images, but not with any specific meaning to the specific song, other than emotional as far as I am aware.

[GR] Upon unfolding the CD, the first photograph is a breathtaking shot of what appears to be a stormy sky filled with beautiful clouds (with the sun trying to peer through), hovering over a dark body of water. Where and when was this photo taken?

[PC] That is Sand Bay near where we lived in Weston-super-Mare. We used to walk the dogs there often.

[GR] These photographs have such a sense of simplicity to them yet they capture the theme of this album—death—so well. There are a few pictures that I am very fond of; the facial shot of Jhonn, the deer in the grass, what appears to be a skeleton of a "sea horse" and MOST of all, the very interesting photo of the decaying person hanging from the tree. A lot of people are interested in the story behind this "hanging body." Could you please shed some light on these photographs?

[PC] The photos of the deer and the crows and Sand Bay were taken by Ian. I think I took the picture of Jhonn (post mortem obviously) and the sea-horse thing and the body in the tree were pictures that we found. I'm afraid I do not have more details of the body in the tree, but it struck a chord obviously. As with much of Ian's (and indeed Coil's) work, many decisions like this were made on a purely instinctive basis, without any intellectualisation.

[GR] The artwork on the cover (that is also next to the lyrics of "Tattooed Man") is the only one that differs from the other pictures, as this appears to be a water-color painting. Is there a specific reason for this? Is that the infamous Ape of Naples?

[PC] That is Ian's painting. I believe it is acrylic on melanin. I can't say if the subject of the painting is "The Ape" as such.

[GR] The "special" art edition of the three (one-sided acetate) 12 inch LPs is called *Racing Green Box*

could you please give us a little background about this and why it is called "Racing Green Box"? I also noticed (from a picture) that the originally planned numbered edition of 23 box sets, is now limited to just 13 sets. Is that correct and what was the reason for the change (from 23 to 13) in the numbered editions?

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[PC] The edition is still intended to be 23, but the first 13 were so difficult for Ian to make that he has for the moment stopped. The first batch has all been sold to long time Coil collectors—He hopes to finish the rest later in the year. I don't know why they are called "Racing Green"—no part of the edition is green as far as I know.

[GR] If Jhonn had not passed away and Coil continued on, was Ian planning on doing more artwork for Coil and will Ian be doing any future artwork for your new band (The Threshold Houseboys Choir)? Or will you be doing most all of your own artwork?

[PC] I expect Ian will be involved with the artwork for any further Coil releases including the DVD/video boxed set and any other audio releases (as yet undecided) but probably not with THBC. It's possible we will still collaborate on other projects. I don't know yet.

[GR] Where the title—The Ape of Naples—come from? Who decided on the title and what is the story behind the name?

[PC] Simon (Ossian) used to work in a shop in London's soho that sold bootleg gay porn videos—mostly on VHS. These had hand written titles on them. Jhonn and he often used to entertain themselves by inventing imaginary titles for gay porn tapes as yet unmade—obviously to imply some sort of outlandish sexual perversion or speciality. "Black Antlers" and "The Ape of Naples" were our favorites.

[GR] Regarding the recording process for this final Coil album; I imagine it was very "therapeutic" for you in many ways. Could you please elaborate on some of this? And is there anything else you would like to share about *The Ape of Naples* that we may find of interest?

[PC] I suppose it was most therapeutic in the sense that all those tracks that had been unfinished for reasons that were not clear to me, suddenly could be, and for the first time made sense. Also, that it was possible to make an artistic statement about what had happened. Reluctant as I am to end on the cliché: the album provided "closure" and artistic integrity both for me and for everyone that loved Coil, and missed Jhonn.

The Threshold Houseboys Choir

[GR] Sometimes when you hear a new band's name for the first time, it may sound a bit odd and you need to hear it a few more times before it sinks in. But for Paul & I, this was not the case at all. Something about the name The Threshold Houseboys Choir is just so perfect and fitting. Could you please tell us how you came up with the concept as well as the name for your

new project?

[PC] Well before Geff died, I was messing around with different ideas for new projects and one that came to mind was "The Threshold House of Boys" (based—as with several other Coil songs—on the codes and categories employed by the *Spartacus Gay Guide*). They call boy-brothels "Houses of Boys" and so naturally I thought that would be a fascinating new business direction for Threshold House!

When I checked, I found that www.houseofboys.com was already in use, and on reflection I came to the conclusion that actually running a boy-brothel (and having to deal with the public) would almost certainly not be as much fun as visiting one regularly as a customer!

So the next idea I had was The Threshold-House Boy's-Choir—rather like the Vienna Boy's Choir I thought. From there it was a small lateral step to The Threshold HouseBoys Choir. This seemed like an improvement because obviously it was fun to be able to guess what the Threshold HouseBoys might be like.

At the time—Spring 2004—living alone with Geff (who was going through a 'bad patch'—screaming, passing out on the rocks, pissing and shitting the bed etc) in the cold and draughty North Tower building, with the rain beating in from the sea onto cracked windowpanes with bits of Geff's hair in the glass where he had smashed his head against them, it was a comforting fantasy for me to imagine a different life where I was waited on hand and foot by beautiful brown skinned HouseBoys, who would do anything I asked of them, and take care of my every need.

Little did I know this was to come to pass in a two short years! You have to be careful what you wish for I guess :-}

[GR] I know that the THBC is a solo project, yet I notice that after the name The Threshold HouseBoys Choir you state "under the direction of Peter Christopherson." It almost gives the impression that the THBC actually IS a choir (made up of a group of people) and you are the conductor so to speak. Is there a specific reason for this statement?

[PC] Well to (falsely) give that very impression of course! :-)

In fact I do regard the vocalists as future collaborators, even though they will exist only within the computer. Ultimately I hope to develop software that will run my CGI singers' performances "live" on the video screen above the stage, controlled and manipulated by my live "conducting" below, so it will be true after all. That's a long way off though. I talked to Geff about this idea and he was extremely scathing imagining me waving my arms around like some kind of naff performance-art puppet-master!

At first I was considering actually hiring Thai boys to sing for me, but at about the same time, the gorgeous (and sweet) lad whose room I was staying in till I found an apartment (who could actually sing quite well), got extremely drunk and starting throwing up, pissing himself and pitifully calling me to help him. I had such a horrible moment of epiphany if that's the right word -

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of deja vu certainly - that I got dressed and walked out of his life, leaving him in the capable hands of his (adoring) gay friend (Well the lad WAS adorable, handsome and charming, as well as alcoholic, and I still miss him).

But at that moment I vowed not to repeat myself unnecessarily, and to keep my singers in firmly software from then on.

[GR] The 2 tracks I have heard by the THBC are both very well done. Your debut track, "Mahil Athal Nadrach," is on the compilation album *It Just Is...In Memoriam: Jhonn Balance* and the second track, "So Young it Knows No Maturing," is on the new release *X-Rated-The Dark Files*

. Could you please tell a little about how these two tracks came to be?

[PC] Last fall, Ivan Pavlov of COH called me to tell me about the invitation to us both to play in St Petersburg on Dec 23rd.

In Thailand it's like the opposite of Narnia (where you will recall its "always winter, and never Christmas") Over here its more a question of "never Winter and always Christmas" !!!!! So Christmas itself is a bit of an anti-climax, so I figured it would be good to do something mad like leave the 30 degree heat and go to a place that was 30 below!

But in order to play live solo for the first time, I knew had to have some songs written and recorded (to use as backing tracks much as Coil had always done using Ableton Live with the scope to mould the shape of the show as it progressed) and also allow me to play various bits and pieces over the top.

Then the promoters emailed me to ask if I wanted to play video with show and since obviously it would take away some of the eyes staring at me. :-) I said I did, and quickly edited some extremely beautiful but extremely gory footage that I'd shot the year before at the Gin Che (Vegetarian) festival in Krabbi. The footage naturally fell into four sections that were then just called "Parts 1-4" and I wrote four pieces of music to go with them. Then the Russians asked if I could contribute a piece to their CD so I tweaked and tarted up "Part 4" and it sent off. Subsequently Roel Kruse of Boudisques asked for a track too. I think he got an edited version of "Part 3."

Yesterday I appeared at the Bangkok New Media Arts Festival and played an edited version of "Part 1," with an edit of the pictures compressing all four parts on 3 minutes (!), and made a few comments afterward about how I loved Thailand because of the ease with which Thai people accept the existence of ghosts and other plains of reality, but it didnt occur to me till afterward that I should have said it in my bad Thai even though the audience mostly spoke English. I am determined to "go native"!

[GR] Both tracks start out with a very simple but excellent sounding "glitchy" electronic rhythm before the rest of the music comes in. Then once the music does does come in, as well as the

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distorted vocals, it becomes instantly mesmerizing and tranquil. With these two tracks in particular, did the music or the vocals come first?

[PC] The way I work—I try lots of different things—usually starting with a rhythm and chord sequence but not always, and as I add more things some stick but most get chucked away or mutilated into something better. As good things develop other things seem to fit. It's a Trial of Errors!

[GR] We are looking forward to hearing your forthcoming debut album *Rampant*. Is there any specific meaning to the title and is there a running theme throughout the album?

[PC] It's a bit early to say. I have to complete the Coil DVD box, some TG stuff (unfortunately) and then start the new THBC project with design of the singer characters and figure out the best way to actually make their voices, I might decide to release the presently existing set but I would prefer it to come out as a bonus disc with the new "proper" album. At present it is kind of an intermediate stage, rather than a finished thing anyway.

The title "Rampant" and the title "So Young..." actually come from the I-Ching. Geff would probably not have approved!

[GR] You claim it will be issued on Blu-ray format, but would release a regular CD/LP version since the new technology isn't widely available yet?

[PC] It will have a conventional release and the Blu-ray disc release depends on how soon after that I can animate some HD film images of my singers to go with the music, and also how quickly the pressing plants gear up to handle indy blu-ray releases. Also how quickly consumers buy the players I guess too.... I just wanted to put in an early plug for the clearly technically superior system. As we know from experience superior standards don't necessarily mean Wal-Mart and Circuit City will push the right format though. How many billion useless VHS tapes are there covering in the world now I wonder? At least Betamax tapes would have been a few cubic miles smaller! :-)

Grant Regnaert, "the straight christian," is 33 years old and currently resides in Phoenix, Arizona. Since 2001, he has been conducting informal phone interviews with various artists. This interview will be his first formal one published. Grant also holds a Masters in Psychology. And as we all know, psychologists have an inquisitive nature so he was more than thrilled to probe the depths of Sleazy's brain.

Paul Ferguson, "the queer pagan," is 31 years old and currently resides in Oakland, CA. Also inquisitive but in a more agoraphobic fashion, manipulates subcultures from the depths of its shadows. Paul first started conducting interviews after a synchronous event after Jhonn's death.

For more in-depth biographies and future/past interviews see www.firstdarkride.com

Finally--

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We'd like to thank Peter Christopherson for putting up with all our overly enthusiast questions. We really appreciate the time he has taken out of his very hectic schedule to participate in the interview. Not only did Sleazy answer our questions, but he went above and beyond the "typical" answer, giving us a lot of great information, containing much pertinent and fascinating details.

Also big thanks to Jon Whitney at brainwashed.com who has helped get our interview out to a larger audience.

The Ape of Naples is available now through [Threshold House](#) .