

FIRST AND LAST AND ALWAYS



PHOTO: TINA SCHULA

A MASTER OF THE PSEUDONYM, FOETUS BIG CHIEF **JIM THIRWELL** REVEALS THE FIRST AND LAST RECORDS HE BOUGHT AND THE DISC HE TURNS TO IN TIMES OF NEED

FIRST

JETHRO TULL

Thick As A Brick
Chrysalis (1972)



The first record I remember buying with my own money was 'Thick As A Brick' by Jethro Tull. It had an elaborate sleeve that folded out into a faux newspaper, telling the story of child prodigy Gerald Bostock. The music is one long piece, which twists through many movements. I can see how this album resonated with me and became part of my musical DNA.

LAST

COLIN STETSON

All This I Do For Glory
52Hz (2017)



This hypnotic album feels like electronic music created acoustically. Stetson uses circular breathing to create repetition of a saxophone, with what sounds like the valve clicks of the instrument to create percussion and rhythm. He manages to vocalize at the same time, and the rich evolving timbres of the instrument make the compositions swell and vibrate. Mesmerising.

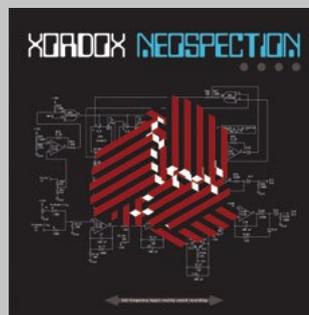
ALWAYS

STEVE REICH/KRONOS QUARTET

Different Trains
Nonesuch (1989)



Reich's early tape phasing experiments, where he loops a phrase which slowly goes out of time with itself and then returns to being in phase blew my mind. 'Different Trains', a meditation on World War Two, hauntingly combines train whistles and speech, transcribed for strings to create melodies and propulsive repetition in ways that are melancholic and then ecstatic.



XORDOX
Neospection
Editions Mego

MORE ALTER EGOS? WITH TUNES THIS GOOD **JIM THIRWELL** CAN CALL HIMSELF MAVIS

Clint Ruin, Frank Want, Steroid Maximus, Wiseblood, Foetus. You'd think Melbourne's James George Thirlwell (more widely known as Jim Thirlwell) would have enough names to make new music under. Turns out you can never have enough alter-egos. Xordox sees the birth of Thirlwell's newest project and alias, with 'Neospection' the first offering under the new pseudonym.

Throughout his lengthy career, Thirlwell has played with the idea of identity, in his earliest days groups like Foetus Under Glass and Scraping Foetus Off The Wheel consisted of a number of fictional characters (the former included Frank Want, Phillip Toss and two Brazilian statistics collectors). To complicate matters further, Thirlwell sometimes adopted these personas outside his own recordings. Notable characters include Frank Want being found on The The's debut record 'Soul Mining' and Clint Ruin working with the likes of Sonic Youth and Nurse With Wound.

So, what's the Xordox persona all about then? Well, it says here that Xordox "orbits a universe inhabited by darkness, wit, mystery, adventure and experimentation". Quite. It was out of that universe that 'Neospection' arrived. Recorded at Thirlwell's own Self Immolation studios, it's much more synthesiser heavy than any of his previous stuff. And much better for it.

'Neospection' is a very cinematic record – eight tracks of gorgeous synth soundscapes. Opener 'Diamonds' has elements of Daft Punk's 'Tron: Legacy' soundtrack about it, echoing, raw pulses from a computer brain. This moves into the burbling tones of 'Antidote', backed by drawn-out synth whines. 'Corridor' pulses into a panicky, Roswell-like melody while 'Pink Eye' bleeps like a crackled alien radio transmission. The jewel of the album comes with the atmospheric closing track 'Asteroid Dust', a 15-minute intergalactic cruise across the cosmos that quivers, groans and oscillates in all the right places.

Hopefully, Thirlwell isn't about to switch names again. 'Neospection' is a quality debut from a man unafraid to stray outside his many boxes. If Xordox can make us many more records like this from that dark witty universe, we'll be very happy chaps and chapettes indeed.

FINLAY MILLIGAN