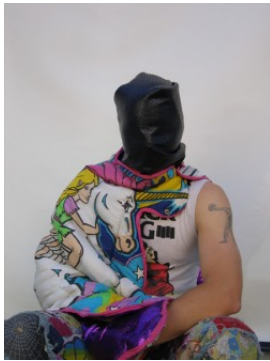


Brainwashed - Drew Daniel: In Praise of Vagueness

Written by Jonathan Dean

Saturday, 02 February 2008 18:00 -



Drew Daniel, Oxford-educated English professor and member of [Matmos](#) and [Soft Pink Truth](#) recently contributed to Continuum's excellent 33 1/3 series with a slim volume memorializing and analyzing [Throbbing Gristle](#)

's
20 Jazz Funk Greats

. Drew took time out of his crazy schedule to talk to me about the book, the legacy of TG, the notion of a "rock canon," and the virtues of vagueness and multiplicity.

Jonathan Dean: How did you get the opportunity to write a book in this series? And did the editors of the series balk at your choice of album? It does seem a bit out of place: *Throbbing Gristle* don't seem like the "classic album" type of band. When we think about TG, we tend to think about the whole phenomenon rather than specific albums. Did this make the book a harder sell? Did it make it harder to write?

Drew Daniel: David Barker posted an open call for proposals on the blog associated with the series, and I knew that this was the album I wanted to pitch to him. Of course it felt like a longshot, yet it also made a perverse kind of sense: this album presents itself as a collection of "Greats" so it's already unpacking—and mocking—the idea of greatness and canonization in its title. More importantly, as an album that veers wildly across genre lines I think *20 Jazz Funk Greats* challenges a lot of what tends to be celebrated about so-called "classic albums": unity, focus, clarity, singleness of purpose. I wanted to have the chance to write in defense of recalcitrance and vagueness and difficulty and multiplicity as positive things. I'm grateful that he took a chance on me. We will see how the book does and then we'll know just how tough a sell it will be. Writing about TG was difficult for me in that I had to undo some of my own adolescent instinctive familiarity with the music and try to hear it free of habits and associations, if that is possible. Describing improvised music is especially tricky and can lead to really bad writing if you're not careful.

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