

COIL *Interviewed by* **NAKED**



Unique amongst the varied souls that inhabit The Empty Quarter, those who we describe as 'experimental', 'industrial', or many other unsatisfactory tags that attempt to describe the intangible, Coil's music has that certain special quality that makes it shine.

Since the first tentative beginnings following the split with PTV, best encapsulated by the track *Homage To Sewage* on *Third Mind's Life At The Top* LP and the *How To Destroy Angels* single-sided album on *Laylah*, Coil have developed before our very eyes, twisting and turning into the tortured shapes of *Scatology*, the operatic *Horse Rotorvator*, numerous compilations, collaborations such as *Nightmare Culture* with *Current 93* and soundtracks like the criminally rejected music for *Clive Barker's Hellraiser*.

Each release packed in a number of different sleeves and formats, all bearing the Coil stamp of quality and attention to detail. To the Coil collector they frustratingly reissue everything in new packaging, different mixes, completely new versions. Why still stand still when you can dance?

And now? *Love's Secret Domain* is probably the best yet. A whirling, seductive elixir, an alchemical mix of magical proportions with standout contributions from long time ally *Marc Almond* and flanked on either side by the *Windowpane* and *Snow* EP's - 1991 sees Coil making a stab at getting across to a wider audience. It was with this in mind that I found myself in the really rather nice (Well, what did you expect, a blood soaked dungeon?) house that *Peter Christopherson* (aka *Sleazy*) and *Geoff Rushton* (aka various names depending on the phases of the moon) share in a leafy, suburban *Chiswick* ("It's nice to have somewhere to come back to", Peter) sipping a rather instant tasting coffee and watching Peter attempting to tune in his new video machine, a contraption that seemed to consist largely of buttons, but boasted a remote control eject feature!

NAKED: Maybe you should adjust it so it fires the cassette back at you? Then you wouldn't have to get up at all.

PETER: Good idea, maybe I'll patent it.

NAKED: With Love's Secret Domain I sense you are aiming for a new audience. The LP did get into the indie charts, so does this mean the Coil audience has changed now?

GEOFF: I'm not sure if the chart represents anything really, we were higher in the chart that represents The Chain With No Name shops. I think we have worked on having a firm foundation and that has expanded considerably, especially in Europe. England's dead though. We have problems because we don't tour as a group and we don't do in-store promotions, we hardly ever get it together to do T-shirts and we don't get played on the radio. If we did all those things then we would keep in the charts a bit longer.

N: So does using a promotion company, as you did for this LP, help at all?

G: Well, we're not completely happy with them, but then they are up against it with Coil. It's difficult to break through here as the independent scene has become this industry where you have to court the right people and get your album hooked up as The Chain With No Name's album of the month at least six months in advance. We can't be bothered with all of that. Maybe we just don't want to play the game anymore?

N: Surely that's just England, you do better in Europe, don't you?

G: Yes, it is fair to say we do a LOT better in Europe. Basically that's just because we have been going for ten years now and it's a bad time for us.

N: In what way?

G: Well, the perception is that we should either split up, or have a really massive media push or we'll end up like Cabaret Voltaire - just ticking along. People seem to get resentful if you've been going for ten years.

P: There's also this attitude in England that you can only be interested in things that are moving.

G: Yes, it is very much geared towards the 'new thing' at the moment.

N: Fashion oriented you mean?

G: Well, it's certainly got very much more that way inclined, whereas before some group would come along and you'd go and see them regardless of their status. That way groups were free to have a more interesting, harder profile.

N: Do you think it's just that people are less open-minded here than in mainland Europe?

G: It's less polarised than over here. The charts do go up and furiously down here, but I'm sure we'll last a lot longer than most of the groups around at the moment.

N: Is that what you're aiming for, longevity?

G: Well, let's say we work at not disappearing. Though we sometimes feel like disappearing too!

N: Coil has a certain feel that is hard to specify. You have to seek it rather than have it thrust in your face.

P: We aim at people who take the trouble to investigate things that are a bit obscure. Whether they live in Houston, Brazil, Israel, or whatever - they'll find us. We don't want people to buy it simply because it's been promoted, we want people to research.

N: The Snow EP is certainly a more 'commercial' sound though - almost dance really?

G: It dovetails a lot more into what's going on 'out there', rather than what we do which can be quite insular. We don't compromise anything we do though.

P: This is Coil, simply doing something different.

N: Do you listen to any of the acid house stuff?

G: We started doing ecstasy in 1987 and going to acid clubs when it started. We spent three years enjoying it rather than doing it.

N: To move onto a more contentious subject, I did notice that Love's Secret Domain also spells LSD. 'Snow' is also a euphemism for speed or coke. Intentional? Maybe there's a lot of black humour in Coil that people don't appreciate?

P: There is a lot of black humour in Coil and I'm sure some people do appreciate it. We always aim to do things at lots of different levels, with different things to hear, when you're off your face or not, or whatever frame of mind you're in. On a banal level it does spell out LSD.

N: What about Snow? I think of speed in connection with that.

P: I thought of that connection afterwards...

G: It has got a crystal on the front too.

N: Is Coil a New Age band then?

P: New Age amphetmaniacs, maybe.

G: You're allowed to mix things up anyway.

N: What about the rumoured mix/collaboration with Steve Stapleton?

G: Well, he's pretty mixed up already. He keeps coming over, then he disappears again.

N: I heard he lived in a tin hut in Ireland.

G: No, it's a really nice place actually, an old 16th Century cottage with goats and stuff. A National Trust place I think. There's a huge piece of land with rocks and poisonous thorns that if you tread on them you have to go to hospital. [Shows me a collection of gashes on his arms from the lethal vegetation]. I thought I had caught some fatal disease.

N: Do you like getting poisoned?

G: No, not really. What a weird thing to say!

N: Well, it was my clever journalistic lead in to ask you about sewers, shit and all the anal fixations you've had since Scatology. Tracks like The Anal Staircase and Homage To Sewage. You seem to keep coming back to this theme. You've even got an "I've been to Brighton Sewers" sticker in your window! What's so fascinating about shit?

P: We've always been interested...

G: Not so much of the 'we' here please.

P: ... in the real nature of what lies beneath the veneer. The way people actually are underneath. At the bottom [sic] of anything is the waste and the return to the land of nitrates.

G: It's more like a reincarnation - we all return to our roots.

P: [Adopts Neil, the Hippy voice] It's like 'nature grows the seeds, we sow the seeds', etc.

G: Actually there's just as many references to gold as shit in our records. It's an alchemical reference.

P: I don't think it's fair to focus just on the shit aspect. We are interested in all kinds of extreme behaviour of a spiritual or physical nature, so there are just as many references to death and decay as there are to the peaks of experience. We always strive to avoid the bland.

N: It's always interesting to go to one extreme or another.

P: So why not both?

G: It's not just music, we're dealing in art and we have to use symbols that mean something to everyone. On the sleeve design for Love's Secret Domain I gave Steve Stapleton - who did the design - a brief of what I wanted, like a skeleton and a shield. He took those ideas and surrealised them.

N: And a winged dick.

G: It's just an idea that I had. No other reason - just an image that I liked.

N: To move on to a different tack... Why did the music for Hellraiser never get used?

G: We dropped out because we were being compromised. I don't mind being compromised as long as we do it on our own terms, but both us and Clive Barker were being compromised and as this was his first feature, he allowed himself to be compromised. This was his big entrance to hollywood in a sense and we didn't fit into this project. We had a head on collision with them.

N: Would Coil make a movie of their own? Surely all movies have to be commercial and that makes everything about them commercial.

G: Not necessarily. Making a film is a lot different to making a record. When you make a commercial record there are all sorts of criteria that you have to abide by, whether you have the right kind of sound for the radio and all that stuff isn't necessarily the case with a film. There's a lot less of a narrow band. Take a film like Henry, Portrait Of A Serial Killer, that's a successful film, yet it's about a mass murderer. It only cost \$100,000 to do as well.

N: Surely that's the sort of sum you could get together to do your own film?

P: Can you lend me that?

N: You know what I mean. It's not that much to raise in film terms.

P: Well, I'm cautiously optimistic...

I would be more cautiously optimistic where Coil are concerned! Some of the topics we covered, such as the Nurse With Wound collaboration have already come to fruition, with recording having been completed as you read this. I've no doubt that the somewhat secretive plans for a film will also bear fruit. For music that is so wilfully perverse, focusing on the darker side of life, Coil are remarkably expressive about the reasoning behind the noises they create. Images of gold, power, dreams, thread through the records like a stream (of consciousness). Coil may well have entered into Love's Secret Domain and tasted The Snow, but there's a lot of exploration still to do and have no doubt, Coil are up to the job.

