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Fight Your Own War: Power Electronics And Noise Culture



Synopsis

Power electronics is a genre of industrial or "noise" music that utilises feedback and synthesizers to produce an intense, loud, challenging sound. To match this sonic excess, power electronics also relies heavily upon extreme thematic and visual content • whether in lyrics, album art, or live performance. It is a genre that often invites strong reactions from both listeners and critics, if not dismissed or ignored altogether. FIGHT YOUR OWN WAR is the first ever English-language book primarily devoted to power electronics, bringing together essays and reviews that explore the current state of the genre, from early development through to live performance, listener experience, artist motivation, gender and subcultures, such as "Japanoise". Written by artists, fans, and critics from around the world, FIGHT YOUR OWN WAR provides comment on a musical form that is at once theatrical and absurdist, while bringing to listeners a violent, ecstatic, and potentially consciousness-altering experience. In considering this "spectacle" of noise, how far can we simply label power electronics as a genre of shock tactics or of transgression for transgression's sake?

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Customer Reviews

Jennifer Wallis is a historian and author, currently living in Oxford, UK. She is a fan of power electronics and has previously worked with noise act Hate-Male.

From "Questionable Intent: The Meaning and Message of Power Electronics", Richard

Stevenson. With potential 'meaning' couched in ambiguity, power electronics forces the listener to engage with and interpret the material based on their own perceptions and biases; the questions and interpretations of the listener could be considered to be of far greater importance than the material presented. From this standpoint does antagonism and provocation play a specific role? One might ask what the function is of the direct antagonism of much of The Grey Wolves' output, who reference extreme elements of both left- and right-wing politics. Likewise, as something of an agent provocateur to many critics of power electronics, should the works of Ulex Xane as Streicher be taken at rather crass face value; considered on a deeper level as a societal critique; an exploration of the nature of taboo; an artistic exploration of absurdism, or perhaps the logical (illogical?) conclusion of total nihilism? More broadly, could such antagonism and provocation be a means to seek the subversion of the status quo – be it political, religious, cultural or societal – or to highlight the hypocrisy of such authorities, systems and institutions? In order to frame these general premises, it's worthwhile analysing the extensive work of Genocide Organ. In existence for three decades now (established in 1985), the four-piece from Mannheim, Germany have risen to a cult level within the heavy industrial and power electronics scene to become one of the most revered or reviled acts of the genre, depending on your interpretation. Their status is as much a consequence of their 'controversial' thematic material as it is their extremely physical approach to sound – as well as the packaging of their releases, which have engendered a collector fetishism due to the rarity and special presentation of early recorded outputs. Also rather counterintuitively, their underground status seems to have been immeasurably boosted by their general aversion to conducting interviews. The only readily available interview with the group was published in issue five of cult underground publication Descent Magazine (June 1999). From an analysis of Genocide Organ's recorded output, it's evident from their lyrics, texts, images and dialogue samples that there is a sustained focus on war, the Ku Klux Klan, conspiracy theories, American imperialism and militarism, terrorism, the Third Reich, and fetishism. Their releases come armed with loaded titles such as Klan Kountry (1996), Mind Control (1995) and The Truth Will Make You Free (1999). Even their name begs the question: what is the 'organ' of genocide? Is it the brain that formulates the idea? The tongue that articulates the order? The body that executes the task? Or is the name referring to the collective 'organ' of state or government, and the actions of its apparatus such as the military? Genocide Organ are clearly striving for higher aims beyond mere 'music' and 'lyrics', and their approach could be considered their Gesamtkunstwerk: to synthesise musical, visual and thematic materials into a comprehensive and all-embracing aesthetic art form.

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