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England's Hidden Reverse: A Secret History Of The Esoteric Underground



Synopsis

Based on hundreds of hours of interviews with members of the seminal music groups Coil, Current 93, and Nurse With Wound, England's Hidden Reverse illuminates a shadowy but deeply influential underground scene. Together these artists and their many associates accented peculiarities of Englishness through the links and affinities they forged with earlier generations of the island's marginals and outsiders, such as playwright Joe Orton, writers like the decadent Count Eric Stenbock, ecstatic mystic novelist Arthur Machen and occult figures like Austin Osman Spare and Aleister Crowley. While functioning as an obsessively researched biography of the three interrelated groups, David Keenan's book also works to trace their influences, explicating a reverse current that runs counter to the mainstream, drawing upon occult strains of transgressive performance, queer sensuality, and richly textured sound worlds. This much-anticipated expanded edition of a book first published in 2002 and long out of print comes completely redesigned, with color throughout, with many new and previously unseen photographs and ephemera, including two new chapters: a final summary of how the "Reverse" has shifted gear since the book was first published, and a new essay, "Crime Calls For Night."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

David Keenan is an author and critic based in Glasgow, Scotland. He has been a regular contributor to The Wire magazine for the past twenty years. His debut novel, This Is Memorial Device, was published by Faber in 2017.

One of these days I'll write a proper review for this solid tome, but in the meantime, if you know who Coil, Current 93, and Nurse With Wound even are, chances are you're probably a fan which can only mean one thing – get this book. Like the Throbbing Gristle book, Wreckers of Civilisation, this is one of the most comprehensive and important books chronicling a cadre of people whose eccentricity, artistic dedication, and uncompromising worldview is virtually unmatched in late 20th century music. They are part of a lineage of outsider culture that exists in the margins if for no other reason than that is where popular culture has seen fit to place authenticity for centuries. Unfortunately, there are not a lot of books about the music and musicians toiling in virtual, cultural obscurity, but this is one of them, and this one is not to be missed.

Great product, great transaction

i've always been attracted to these musicians and learned years ago about this book, which was sadly oop at the time. listening to their music is surreal and often difficult, but like dub music the decade before, following them was like turning a transistor radio dial; there was always overlap, you'd start to notice features and voices and collaborations and could virtually map out a culture from the sound itself. actually being able to read about the culture firsthand (err, second) sometimes has that surreal/frightening duality in equipoise just as their music does, and its also been a real treat. i've always loved coil's music more than the other two, but i have to say reading about tibet's life and obsessions and worldview is by far the most fascinating; reading this definitely had me going into his back catalog, along with almost everyone here, even the smallest of players seemed to have a niche carved out somewhere, if you travel backwards enough, into the past. this new edition has a new foreward and afterward, the former seeming a bit bitter (though i did laugh when he took godspeed down a few pegs, and rightfully so). oh, and it should be noted whitehouse always sucked, william bennett was always worthless and his place in the order of things is given far too much focus early on. a small detraction, everything else here is gold to me. the writing is exceptional and very respectful to all involved, the pictures are worth the price of admission alone, the quotes that accompany the frontispiece to each chapter are insightful, it answers most questions i could have for any of these guys (though i did want to know a bit more about time machines, and if balance ever had the vocal coaching the rumors said he had) and its absolutely leagues above anything else thats been written on the web. next to julian cope's books its the best music criticism i've read. i felt very melancholy when finishing it, like saying both hello and goodbye to an old friend.

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