

Copernicus - 2009 - "disappearance"

(73:04, Nevermore/MoonJune Records)

★★★★☆

TRACK LIST:

1. 12 Subatomic Particles 9:52
2. The Quark Gluon Plasma 7:42
3. The Blind Zombies 8:52
4. Humanity Created the Illusion for Itself 7:11
5. Atomic New Orleans 5:30
6. Poor Homo Sapiens 13:57
7. Revolution 21:05

LINEUP:

Copernicus - vocals, poetry; keyboards
Pierce Turner - Hammond, ac. piano; percussion; vocals
With:
Mark Brotter - drums, percussion
Thomas Hamlin - drums, percussion
George Rush - contrabass, bass; tuba
Marvin Wright - bass, el. guitar; percussion
Raimundo Panaforte - ac. guitar; viola; vocals
Larry Kirwan - el. guitar; vocals
Cesar Aragundi - el. & ac. guitar
Mike Fazio - electric guitar
Bob Hoffnar - steel guitar
Matty Fillou - saxophone
Fred Parcells - trombone
Rob Thomas - violin

Prolusion. Artists are very imaginative people. American poet and singer Joseph Smalkowski asserts that COPERNICUS is his heteronym, i.e. another embodiment of his self, who lives and creates on this particular earthly plane at the very same time, too, yet separately from him. However, Joseph is not the first to 'exist' in a few persons, as the matter was 'pioneered' by the Great Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa, whose last name is by the way translated exactly as "person". Okay, the actual hero of this writing is the "disappearance" CD which is presented as Copernicus's solo album, although in the booklet only "all lyrics and main vocal lines" are credited to the maestro, whereas "all music" to "the musicians", who have "created it spontaneously and instantly". Since the players' contribution to the recording has indeed turned out to be weighty (crucial to its – relative – success in fact), I'll touch on Copernicus's one last of all.

Analysis. Unlike the two impromptu efforts I have reviewed last month, "Protoplasmic" by Savoldelli & Sharp and "Helzweig" by SADO, this one is surprisingly, I'd even say unbelievably cohesive, and although on its vocal angle inferior to both those, it is by and large definitely better than either of them. There are a lot more rock than jazz improvisations on "disappearance" (the latter coming mainly from the brass players, of course), besides which most of the seven tracks presented have a quite stable structural basis which even appears as being composed in places. On all four of the longest pieces, *12 Subatomic Particles*, *The Blind Zombies*, *Poor Homo Sapiens* and *Revolution*, the musicians use nothing other than classic (circa 1973) as well as earlier *Pink Floyd* as a springboard for their – yes – quasi symphonic as well as psychedelic space rock and related adventures. To be frank, though, each of these contains quite a few moves that refer directly to the English legend, while the slow-paced *12 Subatomic Particles* and *Poor Homo Sapiens* both sound like variations on "The Dark Side of the Moon" at its mellowest – almost throughout their 10 and 14 minutes of length, respectively, and can generally be hardly perceived otherwise than as Pink Floyd-style ballads, particularly the latter. *The Blind Zombies* is much in the same vein overall, but the implied resemblance disappears when organ and guitar give way to violin and viola, an event occurring somewhere in the middle of the creation. One of the disc's three standouts, the 21-minute closing track *Revolution* comes across as its culmination and gladdens the ear almost throughout – mainly due to the passion and the grand scale with which the players rediscover the essence of Pink Floyd's first deep space fusion explorations (think their earliest two epic compositions, both of which are also full of free rock improvisations). After its fourth fifth, however, the drums begin to carry a hypnotically monotonous rhythm and as the music gets a much more predictable character

hypnotically monotonous rhythm and so the music gets a much more predictable character, bringing to mind “Out & Intake” as well as some ‘90s creations by [Hawkwind](#). Of the remaining three tracks, *Humanity Created the Illusion for Itself* begins and develops much in the same manner as Revolution’s finale, but – thanks to the brass players’ activity – has a distinct jazz smack. Soon, however, the band turns to one of the classic stages of Hawkwind’s work, circa “Space Ritual”, so the rest of the piece is even a more pleasing listening affair. *The Quark Gluon Plasma* and *Atomic New Orleans* both fall out of the album’s prevalent style. The first of these, while never exceeding the bounds of quasi-symphonic Art-Rock, is a true piece of art, very original and inventive, and is probably my favorite track here. Besides the – traditionally widespread – organ, electric guitar, bass and drums, it features two acoustic guitars which make a duel between themselves before getting involved with the gang’s joint escapades :-). Finally, most of *Atomic New Orleans*, which is the sole instrumental here, is a melodic improvisation on a standard rock-and-roll rhythmic base. As for Copernicus’s vocals, inhabiting something halfway between a howl and a moan, they’re much less to my taste than those by keyboardist Pierce Turner – his main partner who, unfortunately, sings on only two, at most three of the tracks (though even there only in places). His narrations have also a kind of demonic quality to them and are often even more repellent than the vocals. Reflecting his – rather disdainful – point of view on humanity, Copernicus’s poetry is full of pseudo-scientific as well as pseudo-philosophic conclusions, and yet is delivered like being the truth in its last instance. Furthermore, he often plays the oracle like he’s a god himself, ‘gifting’ us – yeah, the same ‘stupid’ mankind – with imperative slogans, most of which he repeats over and over again, letting out a shrill scream at the end of each.

Conclusion. I’ll try to be short here. This 73-minute recording would have left a much better impression had it not featured any poetry, etc, though those fans of Pink Floyd and Hawkwind-style music who either don’t comprehend English or don’t care about lyrics as well as vocals at all might experience a lot of positive emotions while listening to it. That being said, it had fallen to Fernando Pessoa’s lot to bury one of his heteronyms, Ricardo Reiss, a rather long time before he himself has left this world. Maybe he has acted so not without a reason?

VM=Vitaly Menshikov: *October 13, 2009*

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