RETURN TO

COPERNICUS
Cipher and Decipher
2010 (CD, 70:10)
MOONJUNE RECORDS NCD 2092
PERFORMANCE ART/AVANT-GARDE
RATING 13

Call me weird (some folks do already),
but I’m a sucker for a good rant –
written, spoken, or shouted. In the
hair-raising bloviations of Copernicus
(Joseph Smalkowski), performance
poetry morphs to performance rant.
And when his metaphysical/abstract
texts are joined by improvisatory music,
the results can be bizarrely mind-
bending. (Or hilariously scary, if you
come to the party in an altered state
of consciousness.)

The 14th album by this eccentric
New Yorker is quite involved on all
fronts. The craggy white-haired one
accompanies himself on keyboards
with a 13-member backing group that
flows unpredictably through jazz, rock,
psychedelic and world-beat motifs.
All the while Copernicus emotes like a
crazed evangelist on topics that defy
immediate comprehension via “Into
the Subatomic,” “Mud Becomes Mind,”
“Matter is Energy,” “Step Out of Your
Body,” etc.

If your sanity survives the
final cut, 15-minute free-jazzer “The
Cauldron,” you just might find yourself
among the heady elite who actually
get this guy. – JOHN COLLINGE