Grotus is a four piece heavy music band from San Francisco. The sound incorporates lots of drums, 2 basses, throaty vocals, guitar, and tons of sampled sounds of everything from yodeling pygmy trios to cartoon music to power tools. Lyric themes include steroids in cows, drugs in people, humans in nature, war as entertainment, Zen, cosmetic surgery, cancer, environmental destruction, radical history, and so forth. Performances include projected video, huge volume, hair, sweat, Star Trek bits, smoke, and a healthy dose of Spinal Tap.

Grotus was formed in November 1989 as a three piece by guitar rock victims Fox, Tanner, and Carson. Intent on doing something different, the trio got some samplers and began to make sample-based music-soundtrack/collage/crush-rock with a strong political bent. Grotus added a live drummer, Bruce Boyd, in March '91 and quickly gained a strong local following, leading to opening slots for national touring acts including Nine Inch Nails, Mr. Bungle, Jesus Lizard, and Consolidated. They released two singles and appeared on two compilations before releasing their debut full length work, Brown, in November 1991. Then followed their first U.S. tour, supporting Mr. Bungle, in March and April '92. The previously scorned guitar began making an occasional cameo, beginning an evolution into the heavier locomotive rhythms present on Grotus' Spirit EP, Luddite, released February, '93. A second full length album is due out on Alternative Tentacies in April, '93, and plans for extensive touring in both the U.S. and Europe are underway.

**GROTUS IS:**
John Carson: bass, samples  
Lars Fox: voice, drums, samples  
Adam Tanner: samples, guitar, bass  
Bruce Boyd: drums

Management: Fawnee Evnochides, 415-282-9917  
Grotus, P.O. Box 170487, San Francisco, CA 94117

**RELEASES:**
EDWARD ABBEY/CASH COW, 7" single (a benefit for Bay Area Earth First!) issued by Spirit Records, March '91  
PHARMACEUTICAL, included on Bay Area industrial compilation From The Machine, Index Productions, April '91  
OBSCENE, included on Kamation International II compilation, issued by Spirit Records, August '91  
MOTHER OF PEARL/AMERICAN BAND, 7" single (recorded live), issued by Smelly Records, September '91  
BROWN, full length album, issued by Spirit Records, November '91  
PHARMACEUTICAL, (re-mix), included on California Cyber Crush Compilation, issued by C.O.P. Int'l, October '92  
LUDDITE, CD EP, issued by Spirit Records, February '93  
SLOW MOTION APOCALYPSE, full length album, issued by Alternative Tentacles Records, April '93

some kind words about Grotus:

"Ministry may deserve credit for merging industrial dance rhythms with steely metal guitars, but its the more abrasive, scalpel-edged bands such as Grotus and Skrew that will effectively infiltrate and overthrow the artsy techno underground"  
-Spin

"If ever there was a musical model for the monstrous offspring of television, processed food and pathological disregard for ecology, its on this CD."

-CMJ

"...songs like broken crayons squeezed through extrusion machines. The resulting puddle of swirled ego shoulders like mankind's politically incorrect doom, a brown world where future generations drown in cola flavored discontent and oil companies spew plastic cereal to the masses."

-The Nose (SF)
KERRANG! KRITICS' CHOICE
ALBUMS OF THE YEAR 1993!
Grotus

Brown
(Spirit, P.O. Box 170195, San Francisco, CA 94117/415-252-1139)

Grotus' debut assimilates the messages bombarded upon post-hippie progeny from infancy to adulthood and spews toxic, unsettling projectiles back out—if there was ever a musical model for the monstrous offspring of television, processed food and pathological disregard for ecology, it's on this CD. From origins very identifiably San Francisco, the four Grotusheads tangle with mankind's most egregious misdeeds, striking with state-of-the-art musical weaponry, the sampler and a warehouse of industrial steel implements at the center of the fray. Grotus' arrangements form a sort of cyber-orgiastic battleground, a warning backdrop for the approaching millennium with whiplash samples (incorporating the collective unconscious with The Brady Bunch and Star Trek), every stray noise poled into a combative percussive morass. The sole human presence, vocalist Lars Fox, uses his mutant gruntings to emulate the agonies of industrial barons sent to hell for their greed. Half cautionary tale, half techno-revelry, Grotus are horrified and repulsed by the mindless steamrolling of progress, but simultaneously find their mode of expression within a machine-rulled domain, their cries of urban disgust issued from an environment bristling with techno-armor. Grotus is at its strident, unsettling best on "Las Vegas Power Grid," "New York Strip," "Malthusela," "Daisy Chain" and "Edward Abbey" (from the debut?).

Grotus

Brown

Spirit

As Wax Trax and Nettwerk, once the standard bearers of Industrial music, have lost the stranglehold they once had on the genre, it was inevitable that others would quickly fill the gap. And as Chicago was once the industrial mecca, now attention seems to be shifting westward toward San Francisco. Those who have been paying attention could have seen industrial heavyweights Grotus coming a couple of months ago. With two wonderful 7" singles in the past six months under their belt, their new LP Brown screams into your head and kicks you in the ass. The music is rough, no wimpy disco/industrial will be found here. The samples are some of the freshest; and, incorporated in some of the most refreshing ways I've heard recently. There is something that will appeal to all those who enjoy rough, hard-edged music in Brown. From industrial noise to solid club cuts, the only question is, where is the vinyl? (535 Ashbury Street, #1, San Francisco, CA 94117)
GROTTUS - LUDDITE - LP/CD - ALTERNATIVE TENTACLES
A Grotius album turned up earlier this year and I hated it - which was as distressing as finding yourself saying, 'Robbie is my favourite member of Take That'. It was distressing because Alternative Tentacles never put out bad records - I thought they'd lost it. Matter were set to right on the A.T. front with the release of Nomesano's magnificent Call Me Mr Happy EP.

Things get even better with Luddite - the new five-tracker from Grotius. Still hitched up to a very uncommercial sound but now packing more menace, harder rhythms and some beefy guitars to go along with the wiggly samples and demon vocals. What In The World and Brown see this fusion at it's most effective, the songs really bulldoze along. Sometimes being proved wrong is an absolute pleasure. KRISS KNIGHTS

PAINT IT RED
OCT 93

Grotius - Slow Motion
Apocalypse LP / Luddite MLP
(Alternative Tentacles)
Generally speaking, your average industrial band's use of samples stretches to a few lines of 'Blade Runner' dialogue over a drum machine. Not so with uniaut-happy Grotius, who are an object lesson in the intelligent and integrated use of samples in a full band framework. The album actually starts disappointingly, with the leaden opener "Up Rose The Mountain", and the jokey collage of TV presenters and ads of "Good Morning". Then the band crunch into gear with "The Same Old Sauce" and the quality never drops from that point on. This isn't a brilliant album, but it is a very good one, and its main triumph is the way the band's instruments mesh so seamlessly with the various rhythm loops, keyboard and samples so as to create a truly fresh sounding hybrid of electro-rock with eastern influences thrown in for good measure.
'Luddite' continues the bass heavy thrusts and slap happy sampling techniques of its predecessor but retains the listener's attention more fully by weighing in with only five tracks and is probably the better starting point for you should you be tempted.

RECOIL OCT 93
GROTUS: SLOW MOTION APOCALYPSE
(Alternative Tentacles)
Described as Tribal Space Fuzz, this second album from Grotus combines a fine cover with 11 powerful tracks which go a long way towards rejuvenating the exhausted world of sampled technology.

The cover shows the Hindu goddess of destruction Kali, in all the garish colours of the Indian rainbow, and points the way forward for a band which seem destined for great things.

They have been compared to the Young Gods and Cop Shoot Cop, but have created a niche for themselves with Slow Motion Apocalypse.

The music is suitably industrial with regards sound, but Grotus go further with their ability to keep things tight and defined. Add vocals which blend the guttural with the audible and the combination is all too unique.

Grotus have worked with Mark Piste of Consolidated, but they avoid the excesses of Consolidated's full-on political stance.

There are useful samples between several tracks, while Kali Yuga and Shivayanama hint at the Kali cover.

Slow Motion Apocalypse employs a good variety of approaches, again something all too rare with industrial bands.

Outstanding tracks include Up Rose The Mountain and Medicine, while the cover title is Space 2001 - with Shiva replacing computer-nut Hal at the mixing desk.

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RAW OCT 13-26TH
1993

JAMES COOPER

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GROCCABRE July 93

NO.3
Heads up! Here come GROTUS, hell-bent on expanding the possibilities of punk. NGAIRE-RUTH, narrowly avoiding the crushing might of the oncoming wheels, catches them in passing.

WATCH your backs. Grotus are out to shatter your preconceptions. They're going to prove, once and for all, that guitar power pop (i.e. Nirvana), is not the be-all and end-all of punk rock. Derived from what they perceive as the root of all good things, experimentation, the sound of Grotus is a fierce yet truly funky being, partly serious, partly completely kidding. They're signed to the no-nonsense Alternative Tentacles label, and yet they have just quoted Peter Gabriel's world music, "Passion" LP, as a major influence.

In this case, I believe them. The reference points people have been using as Grotus comparisons sound more like a prospective festival billing than a description of one band: Cop Shoot Cop, Ministry, Disposables, The Young Gods, The Jesus Lizard, Consolidated, Red Hot Chili Peppers... they are, as guitarist and sampler aficionado Adam Tanner so delicately describes, "a misfit". And, up until now, they have been on their own planet, somewhere in San Francisco.

"It was a challenge, doing something raw and primal with technology," says frontman Lars, who proves to be a remarkably softly-spoken, sensitive gent, in contrast to the onstage beast. "We have no expectations..."

In truth, Lars only recently let his "drum in bands" era behind him, having become, as he coyly describes, an "artistic-ecologist". But he found himself singing vocals by night for the musical soundscape his two friends, Adam Tanner and John Caruson (bass), were creating. (They thought they had given up rock 'n' roll, too.) "San Fran is like London," explains Adam. "They are so many bands who can't even get a support slot on a Wednesday, so we didn't think about taking our music to the live circuit, we were just satisfying ourselves."

"We made this tape, took it to a radio station because we were proud of it, and they actually played it. Suddenly, people wanted to book us."

A band that happens by accident is a blessed thing. Although it has to be said that Grotus have a lot of direction for an outfit seemingly unprepared for the limelight. They don't come across as people who innocently dabble in anything.

"We're always going to make people ask questions," replies Adam, rather expertly. "In the States especially there are too many artists giving people what they want, not just the supposed anti-establishment heavy metal bands but in alternative music, too. The success of Nirvana and events like Lollapalooza, presenting this season's collection of alternative music like a damn fashion show, are having an effect on the audience and the bands.

"The motivation for making music seems to be about making money, not experimenting."

"That's why, in the world of Grotus, only the extreme and visionary is allowed."

Grotus: a band whose colours you can't co-ordinate.

Grotus' "Luddite" EP is out now on Alternative Tentacles. They start a British tour this week.

MELODY MAKER OCT. 30TH '93
Grotus

Brown

When it comes to politically correct activists, San Francisco seems to have the market cornered. Besides a finite amount of punk bands (living and dead), you can namecheck Consolidated and the Disposable Heroes Of Hiphoprisy for activist street beats.

Grotus are a Bay Area trio whose political focus concentrates on ecological and social issues. Musically they operate in that realm of samples and electronics.

What separates Grotus from the established lot currently out there is that, like their concerns for the planet, they approach their muse organically. This might sound like an oxymoron but Grotus' logic is far less mechanized than Skinny Puppy (whose Too Dark Park partially addressed the same topics). The sound sources are sparse, not heaped, allowing the vocals to be comprehended. The sampling is done creatively much like the Young Gods and Cop Shoot Cop.

Instead of beating their audience into submission with facts, figures and proselytizing, Grotus' lyrics set up the premise; the listener has to do the work. You would have to be totally ignorant (or at least a politician) to miss the sarcasm of "Full Metal Grotus," and the scathing "Las Vegas Power Grid." Tracks like "Rust" and "Pharmaceutical" detail human crutches (work and drugs, respectively). Lars Fox' vocal sounds like Metallica's James Hetfield and commands attention.

This is a powerful record that forges its own identity within a tired genre. Provoking and essential. (Spirit, PO Box 170195, San Francisco, CA 94117) — Jason Pettigrew

Grotus Brown

The digemasters of San Francisco's sample-addicted above-ground underworld have released their first CD collection, including a sweaty tribute to Vulcan logic and sampled psychedelic mind-melds. Behind the I.C. chanting of bald veggie overlords Lars Fox, the prom-club lookalike bass players Adam Tanner and John Carson pump their shit-stirring ears deep into the polluted swamps of the American experience.

Their minimalist pilgrimage through despair includes the danceable sludge of "Las Vegas Power Grid," and the "New York Strip" with its "New York Drip," songs like broken crayons squeezed through extraction machines. The resulting puddle of swirled goo smolders like mankind's politically incorrect doom, a brown world where future generations drown in cola flavored dienemnt and oil companies spew plastic cereal to the sedated masses.

Grotus levitates over genre boundaries into new cesspools of musical composition and smelly sarcasm; brown grabs the industrial category and poxes in a new hole for the bass compression to leak out. Prey unto thy holy mouthbassers of "capitalist sin.

Amen.
ON HIGH ROTATION!

If you've ever thought Kerrang! writers were narrow-minded—think again! Here are 16 playlists of 1993 that say different...

MIKE 'NORTHERN BOY' PEAKE

1. EARTHVERSUS THE WILDCARDS The Wildhearts (EastWest)
2. DRAGLINE Paw (A&M)
3. EXCESS Cecelia (Graydog)
4. V'S.Pearl Jam ( Epic)
5. CHAOS A.D. Sepultura (Roadrunner)
6. WOLVERINE BLUES Entombed (Earache)
7. DESERTIZED Pitch Shifter (Earache)
8. VENUS LUXURIE NO 1 BABY Girls Against Boys (Touch And Go)
9. PETRO-ACTIVE Def Leppard (Bludgeon Riffola/Phonogram)
10. HEARTWORK Carcass (Earache)
11. BROTHER Old Of Love (Columbia)
12. NUDESVERSAL Nudesss Music For Natives (Electra)
13. SOUND OF WHITE NOISE Anthrax (Elektra)
14. WATERFALL (A&M)
15. SLOW MOTION APOCALYPSE Group (Alternative Tentacles)
16. WALLFLOWER My Sister's Machine (Elektra)
17. AUGUST AND EVERYTHING AFTER Counting Crows (Geffen import)
18. MERGE For Love Not Lisa (EastWest)
19. MACK AVENUE SKULLCAME Big Chief (Banquet)
20. POWERTRIPPIN'The Almighty (Rudy's)

MØRAT

1. SUPERJUDGE Monster Magnet (A&M)
2. WE MUST BURN Poison Idea (Vinyl Solution)
3. SUGARFIX The Dwarves (SubPop)
4. DESTROY OH BOYS New Bomb Turks (Cypress)
5. WOLVERINE BLUES Entombed (Earache)
6. SLOW MOTION APOCALYPSE Group (Alternative Tentacles)
7. DISEASE GOHF (Dreamtime)
8. NO CURE FOR CANCER Denis Leary (A&M)
9. UNDOINTool (Zoo RCA)
10. MINX Leatherface (Roughneck)
11. BASTARDS Motorhead (IYX) (Roadrunner)
12. TRANSPORTATION SPEEDWAY LEAGUE Clutch (EastWest)
13. CHAOS A.D. Sepultura (Roadrunner)
14. ANIMATORE Cubanate (Dynamica)
15. DESERTIZED Pitch Shifter (Earache)
16. ONE HUNDRED PERCENT TWO FINGERS
17. IN THE AIR PUNK ROCK Chaos UK (Slap Up)
18. THE FULL CUSTOM SOUNDS OF THE REVEREND HORTON HEAT The Reverend Horton Heat (SubPop)
19. SESSIONS OF THE DAMNED The Damned (Strange Fruit)
20. BUDSPAWN Wool (London)
21. AMERICAN GRAPHICFY Firebird (Beggars Banquet)

JASON 'REBEL' TAYLOR

1. INDEPENDENT WORM SALOON Butthole Surfers (Capitol)
2. SLOW MOTION APOCALYPSE Group (Alternative Tentacles)
3. SUPERJUDGE Monster Magnet (A&M)
4. SUGARFIX Dwarves (SubPop)
5. WOLVERINE BLUES Entombed (Earache)
6. FEAR IS THE MINDKILLER Fear Factory (Roadrunner)
7. TRANSPORTATION SPEEDWAY LEAGUE Clutch (EastWest)
8. HOUIDN Melvins (EastWest)
9. WE MUST BURN Poison Idea (Vinyl Solution)
10. VS Pearl Jam ( Epic)
11. INSIDE THE EYE Skin Yard (Cruz)
12. BUDSPAWN Wool (London)
13. VENUS LUXURIE NO 1 BABY Girls Against Boys (Touch And Go)
14. CHAOS A.D. Sepultura (Roadrunner)
15. DESERTIZED Pitch Shifter (Earache)
16. UNDOINTool (Zoo RCA)
17. INHALER Tool (RCA)
18. HEARTWORK Carcass (Earache)
19. MERGE For Love Not Lisa (EastWest)
20. ON THE KILL TAKER Fugazi (Dischord)
GROTUS
Luddite
Alternative Tentacles Virus 128

SAN FRANCISCO’s Grotus
operate on the border of Sludge and Industrial. There are no light-hearted, Wax Trax-y, MTV-friendly cover versions on ‘Luddite’, which is the mini-album follow-up to this year’s full-length freak out, ‘Slow Motion Apocalypse’. Overall it feels like a more unrelentingly grim affair, which is a pity, because Grotus’ playful, black, humorous edge is what sets them apart from the legions of miserable Killing Joke wannabes.

Whatever the angle of attack, Grotus still do it better than most. The title track is a lumbering dirge that sounds akin to early Swans, and ‘Marginal’ hinges around a quanta of melody that pulls it back from the black hole of absolute doom. ‘Shelllife’ is perhaps the best moment, sounding just like an old Fad Gadget number before the guitar slams in and a deeply fuzzed bass leads a descent into other-worldly strangeness.

‘What Is The World?’ is difficult listening again, while the closing ‘Brown’ is a heavy, bass-driven number on a Kong-ish stoned-out trip. ‘Luddite’, then, isn’t the most accessible point to pick up the trail of Grotus, but it’ll definitely keep converts happy until their European tour in the Autumn. xxx

IAN LAWTON
GROTUS: Slow Motion Apocalypse
(Alternative Tentacles)

OPENER 'UP Rose The Mountain' is locked in a slow-burning, industrial dance gloom, but minus the Euro-techin kind — more a groove funk vibe supplied by toe-twisting bongos, sax and subtile samples. The earnest wash of sounds sets the framework for a genre-bending album, which combines metal bashing outings, lyrics obsessed with the decay of morals, and suller, softer dance influences. It's a little too long, but these San Franciscans are leaps away from the stoic Alternative Tentacles hardcore bracket, and all the more interesting for that.

N.M.E. 12/6/93
ANGELA LEWIS

GROTUS
Slow Motion Apocalypse
(Alternative Tentacles VIRUS 118)

Once, everything on Jello Biafra's label would be noisy, gnarly, good old-time hardcore-ish and extremely left-wing. Disposable Heroes Of Hiphoprisy (and their predecessors The Beatnigs) changed all that. Now, almost everything new from AT seems to be dance-oriented — or, at least, ultra-industrial — and extremely left-wing.

Grotus' début for the label is a sporadically effective work in this vein, throwing up a narrow range of musical comparisions: the Disposables, Young Gods, Ministry... At times, they make an extraordinary racket — 'Good Evening', for instance, uses sampled explosions to amazing effect. Elsewhere, using soundbites stolen from TV news bulletins, they poke fun at newscasters' pseudo-gravitas while getting across the point that this of world is seriously messed-up.

Ironically, their own attitude is often just as sombre. They obviously know their craft — what they need is a little more humour.

Leo Finlay

GROTUS
'Slow Motion Apocalypse'
(Alternative Tentacles VIRUS 118CD)
KKKK
I DON'T know what game Grotus think they're playing, but I sure as hell want to join in.

As you can guess from the album title, Grotus — particularly with the haunting 'Shivayana' — are more than likely to have you conjuring up images of Captain Willard punching the mirror in the classic 'Apocalypse Now'. The overall sound, complete with excellent samples and that Andrew Weiss-like bass rumble, is not entirely comfortable, like the Butthole Surfers, Young Gods, Ministry and Joy Division locked in a padded studio... with Satan at the mixing desk.

With a surprising effortlessness, the band fail to fit into any convenient pigeonholes. Try knocking them into the Industrial box and they'll swerve off in a different direction at the last minute. Likewise, there are too many odd, harsh angles for them to fit into any Indie hole. Then, just when you think they might have 'em sussed, right at the end they veer off into this wonderful tribal pulse, like the hook-beats of the Four Horsemen way off in the distance.

The end is nigh, apparently. Dress informal.

KERRANG! 45

GROTUS
Glow motion apocalypse
(Alternative Tentacles Records)

IMAGINE a band who combine the impact of Consolidated's industrial rhythms with the grooves of Asian activists Fun-De-Mental, the epic grandeur of The Young Gods with the grind of Cop Shoot Cop. Now you have a pretty accurate image of San Francisco four-piece Grotus.

The Hindi Goddess Of Destruction, "Kali", gazes out from the cover of "Glow Motion Apocalypse", officially their second LP but the first available in the UK. Yet Grotus's alt-rock obsessions are not with the destruction of civilization but with nature. And, my word, they're angry, although these songs are harder on themselves than the listener, forcing techno and rock to bump and crunch their way through funky rhythms, right alongside the ever-relying growl of the vocalist. (Foreheads In A Fish tank meet Ministry!)

Easy-listening music is never a criterion for the bands that Alternative Tentacles decide to champion.

NGAIRE RUTH

MELODY MAKER
17/7/93

IAN LAWTON 'RAW'
Grotus - Luddite
(Alternative Tentacles)

Does anyone out there actually read this long winded, pretentious, self-righteous bollocks we write month after month under the
title 'Album reviews'? If so, then you will have been lucky enough to have witnessed me praising Grotus in the last issue, heralding
them as the greatest thing ever to assault my eardrums. But unfortunately, Grotus on these red hot turntables this month, and yes I DO mean unfortunately! I am bitterly disappointed. I expected this mini-album to be packed with sample-laden guitars, and disturbing vocals, & yes, my wish was granted for all of one track. Rock on! You think on listening to the opening
title track with your appetite wetted for more & more hard hitting eruptions. Gasping for air as the intro to track 2 comes on... yet after that you may as well stop breathing because this is real tarts tantrum, a puffts paradise, Europe are heavier than this bunch of panics, A nightmare. And it doesn’t improve... Shelf Life and What in the World are just as bad... with vocalist Lars trying to show off his vocal prowess in an almost embarrassing manner. I just can’t believe it’s happened. It’s like finding your favourite Auntie has been involved in a serious accident. Perhaps, they’re all suffering identity crisis they’re got to be a reason. Closing with 'Brown' my least favourite colour, the phrase 'lost it' springs to the forefront of my mind. I repent.

S. Sally Purple

If further proof is needed that the spirit of Charlie Manson lives on, then a quick carousel around Luddite (Alternative Tentacles) by San Francisco's devilish noise punk GROTUS should set the record straight. Their Berlin Wall of hellish white noise rivals only that created by the Butthole Surfers for sheer ear-blasting quality, yet what differentiates them from the rest of the pack is a dirty groove and a pretty intelligente line in sound bites and samples. There’s echoes of German ‘70s innovators Can jumping around in the witches brew with just the tiniest smattering of Sly Stone’s nether regions for a bit of oomph. It’s weird and painfully powerful stuff that boasts lyrics about steroids in cows and toxic waste, pointing the way for Grotus to be the pestilential vibemasters with a social conscience.

TOP OCT 93

Grotus - Slow Motion Apocalypse (Alternative Tentacles)

Sparingly finding rock with an industrial menace and cyberpunk mentality. The overall sound is akin to some galactic battle and is refreshingly scary.

TOTA LY WIRED 17

Grotus: hard-hitting San Francisco tribal metal outfit, play Harlow Square
(October 29), London Marquee (30), Derby Wherehouse (31), Newport T.J's
(November 1), Preston Caribbean Club (2) and London New Cross Venue (5).

NME 16/10/93

MUSIC

re-view

Grotus
Duchess of York

More sartorially challenged than Zodiac Mindwarz, louder than - erm - just about anything, and making Henry Rollins resemble nothing so much as a librarian, Grotus are the most psychedelic band to hit (literally) the Duchess for a long time. Frontman Lars Fox, in addition to playing drums with a manic intensity, was producing vocals from Hell's seventh circle (and if you looked at him in a certain way, also resembling the denizens of said infernal region). Backed by two guitarists and a positively sulphurous drummer, they hammered out a set that made people think twice about standing at the front. With videos edited by Lars, even if you couldn't hear the words at least you knew what the songs were about (and I hope that no-one who was at that gig will ever eat meat again). As for you bunch of arsewipes that decided not to go - well, what can you say? Arsewipes.

Anita

Northern Star
7/10/93

HOT 'N' HAPPENIN' THIS WEEK!

Chicago-based rockers TAR hit the UK to play Leeds (Wednesday), Manchester (Thursday), Harlow (Friday), Newport (Monday) and Leicester (Tuesday)! Support in Harlow and Newport comes from San Francisco bizarre Industrial act GROTUS (below), who also play their own headlines in Derby (Sunday) and Preston (Tuesday)!
Ask Lars Fox, the singer/lyricist for Grotus, what he does for a living, and he'll tell you the brutal truth: "I dump toxic waste down the drain."

The darkroom worker goes on to explain that he has cut back on certain poisons without damaging the quality of the prints he produces.

Unfortunately, such small compensations aren't enough to satisfy Mother Nature, and you'd better believe she's pissed. Judging from the horrifying close-up head-shot of a minnow on the cover of Grotus' debut LP, Brown on San Francisco's Spirit Records.

"That little fish looks like it's rebelling," sampler/guitarist/bassist Adam Tanner explains. It looks to me like it's telling a very nasty secret to its buddy minnows."

Grotus' sound is "heavy" but frontman Lars admits it is closer to industrial than heavy metal. Still, Lars is resistant to the category, partially because "industrial music is about the erosion of civilization—our music is about the erosion of nature."

Contributing to their steady rise in the San Francisco alternative scene since their formation in 1989 is an emphasis on entertainment rather than dogma. "Our songs talk about a lot of issues, but there's a purposeful ambiguity there," Adam says. "Anyway, we couldn't agree on a message even if we had one," he adds with a wry smile. Unlike their fellow San Franciscans Consolidated, Grotus has focused on music and performance rather than messages and manifestos.

The fruits of their efforts are evident in the riveting live show, a multimedia act including tightly meshed music combined with cartoon and documentary videos spliced by Lars. Musically, the band started out making heavy use of samples and has added a rock layer performed by bassist John Carson, guitarist Adam Tanner and drummer Bruce Boyd (formerly of New Jersey's Pagan Babies). Lars' screech is the focus, akin in its intensity to Mike Ogre of Skinny Puppy.

Like Skinny Puppy, Grotus' songs cover the gamut of biotech alienation. But Grotus avoids the somber, no-fun attitude of the industrial scene, sporting Latin-American pärkas and swinging in silly unison. They know how to laugh at themselves: "Thank you for putting up with our bullsh*t, goodnight."

Grotus does assault the audience in much the same way as Skin Puppy, using their multimedia show and keeping the volume high. "Our show isn't a pick-up scene," Adam says proudly. "You either stay and deal with the confrontation or split."

Most everyone stays, enthralled by some aspect of the show. One example is a video created by Lars, which expressed ideas sometimes in the garbled lyrics and samples: sheep strung up by one leg andreleased, heaping forks of dead flies shoved through parted, salient lips, or animation borrowed from Walt Disney for psychedelic stuff. The juxtapositions are lucid: dinosaurs marching inexorably toward mushroom clouds, video war games, and charred Iraqi babies. Lars himself, five-foot five and bold, bounces in the center of the scene, screaming like a harpy.

"When all that shit's going on, I just get lost," Lars says. "The same can be true for some of the audience, crushed by so many layers and so much volume. But the band's live show is saved from the blob of sound by crunching guitar and bass, which have grown stronger since Brown was recorded. Grotus' evolution into a rock 'n' roll band may save them from the monotonous clamor of assault rock; if you mix all the colors together you always get brown."

The name of the band exemplifies their ability to mock themselves, which saves them from falling victim to critics. Inspired by a packaged tongue, a friend blurted "Grotus"—a subconscious contraction of "gro"bated scrotum." The umlauts were added in honor of Spinal Tap.

—Tom Celebre
KEEP ON ROCKIN' IN THE GENE POOL

by Greg Barbrick

The photograph adorning the cover of Brown is of various types of dead fish that have been sitting on a porch for a week or so. It is an appropriate metaphor for Grotus, who sing of a planet in decay.

"We wanted an image that was beautiful and dead," lead singer Lars Fox says. "I wrote most of the lyrics to Brown just before we recorded it, while I was living, breathing and eating environmental activism. I was really pissed off, enraged in fact, and our music lends itself to that feeling."

Raging, explosive and overwhelming are apt descriptions of Grotus' music, a mix of samples, guitars, drum machines, vocals and more. The mixture is violent and indecipherable, twisted and compelling and has been described as industrial punk, cyber-metal and grinding noise-pop. The hyphens lose the desperate urgency of the music; Brown (their debut on Spirit Records) sounds as if it were recorded on the run, and by the time the rest of us hear it, it will be too late.

The band is based in San Francisco, though the members come from all over. Guitarist and sampler Adam Tanner and Lars were in a flannel band in LA for a few years before Lars left music to pursue his career in environmental activism. Adam and bassist John Carson met in a death rock band and were ready to leave music for other things when they decided to buy some samplers and make soundtracks. They had a little trouble making the samplers work at first, and asked Lars over to help. The trio immediately realized they had the makings of a band that could do anything they wanted it to. The single "Edward Abbey," a benefit for Bay Area Earth First!, was their first release.

The Bay Area cognoscenti quickly took notice, and soon they were opening for bands as diverse as Mr. Bungle, Nine Inch Nails and Consolidated. The need for a live drummer became evident, so they added Bruce Boyd. Since Brown had basically been written and recorded already, the effect of Boyd's addition may only be gleaned by Lars' comment: "We are heavier."

"Live, we try and do a lot of shit at once," Lars says. "We use video to relate images of what the songs are about, because if I am screaming at the top of my lungs or flying through the air, it gets hard to understand what the fuck I'm saying. We have a new song called 'Clean,' about war as entertainment. So we juxtapose video games with footage from the war and then George Bush fishing, then shots of fat, decaying Iraqi soldiers' bodies, followed by Dan Quayle golfing. Ed McMahon introduces it.

"Our bass player and guitar player look a lot alike, so they do lots of synchronized moves. I run around and sweat a lot, and since I am bald, the veins stick out all over my head. The videos are going, we have a lot of smoke going, and we have a light person. It gets confusing, even to us, and it is loud. Grotus is a fucking loud band."

The environmental abstractions of the lyrics still come through clearly, yet the music is pure technology. "Maybe we are being hypocritical," says Lars, "but I kind of see us as a mutant byproduct of our world. This is our music, and for this record we decided to address ecological disregard. The new material we are working on will be much different, not particularly environmental."

What we really wanted to know about, though, was the name, which is properly displayed with umlauts over the consonants. "A friend was walking through the meat department at a supermarket," Lars explains. "And he noticed a package of beef tongue. He just blurted out, 'Oh grotus!' We thought it would make a good name. Originally we were going to call the band Umlaut, and just have two large dots on the cover, but we figured nobody would get it. So instead we decided to emulate Spinal Tap and break the grammatical rules by only putting them over the consonants in our name."

Beyond the message, the music and the umlauts, Grotus had the good sense to pay homage to the musical legacy of Grand Funk Railroad. The B-side of their second single is a cover of "We're An American Band." It is slightly different from the original; rather than a guitar they use a powersaw, and rather than a solo there is a sample of the line, "Come on dudes, let's get it on," repeated over and over. "You have to understand the reason I wanted to do that song was so I could say, 'Come on dudes, let's get it on,'" Lars explains.

(Grotus will be at the Portland Underground 1/17, and at Rock Candy in Seattle 1/18.)

GROTUS
Brown
(Spirit)

Although it has never been considered an industrial stronghold, the Bay Area has at last found a top-notch exponent of the genre in Grotus.

The words that kick-start Brown's title track—"push, meat, blood, and hair"—(those lyrics do seem to be referring to, ahem, fecal matter) warn of what's to follow: meaty, bloody, sweaty, rather dirty music.

Straddling the line between the danceable strains that industrial purists abhor and the grating noise others find completely inaccessible, Grotus's intensely rhythmic music is frightening and hard as nails. Closer to tribal than techno, this is one industrial outfit that is highly attuned to the grind. Brown features a pumping, chunky sound, full of furiously blaring guitars and gritty, tortured vocals. Soundbyle embellishments culled from sources as varied as Star Trek, TV jingles, and old B-movies add an eerie, hallucinatory touch.

Grotus is, of course, a highly political band, and diatribes against environmental destruction, consumerism, television, and genetic engineering figure heavily into Lars Fox's lyrics. But while topical songs can be self-important and annoying, Fox does an admirable job of melding cynicism and poetry. "Daisy Chain" is, for example, a simply worded indictment of the science of destruction that is accompanied by subdued yet nightmarish music; and with its sweeping, terrible grandeur, "Morning Glory" is a portrait of nuclear annihilation that is as seductively beautiful as it is horrific.

Brown is an album that demands to be listened to, preferably with the lights out and the volume turned up very, very loud. In a word: awesome.

—Leah Henmen