



NEUROSYS



New Musical Express 25 July 1992

**NEUROSIS: Souls At Zero
(Alternative Tentacles)**

CRAP NAME, crap cover, but this San Francisco band of nerve grinders have managed to make a record that almost makes up for those faults. 'Souls At Zero' is a noisy little sucker for sure, a slice of blackest Metal with an edge that is scalpel sharp and dipped in poison. They claim to drool at the ankles of Black Flag, Black Sabbath, Chrome, Skinny Puppy, Killing Joke, Joy Division and Pink Floyd, all of whom can be heard rattling chains on this

third LP. But at the core of Neurosis' sound is the thrill of outrage and the power to shock and worry. More Nurofen, anybody?

EDWIN POUNCEY

MELODY MAKER, August 1 1992

NEUROSIS

SOULS AT ZERO

(Alternative Tentacles)

THE American underground is tortured by the Sixties. It can no longer bring itself to believe that dissent will ever achieve anything. The result is Sub Pop's legacy of tortured apathy, its bedrock of broken ideals. But Nirvana, Helmet *et al* haven't just been cast adrift from the Sixties, they've also lost touch with their direct roots, the desperate rage and self-exposure of their early Eighties predecessors, Black Flag and Flipper. Look elsewhere, and you'll see them slowly being reclaimed. There's Rollins of course, but also Tool and, Neurosis, the most vehement, most assertively defenceless of them all. There is one belief they have in common with their sorry peers, though. It's all too late.

Neurosis believe we're on the final approach to the apocalypse. What's ironic is that they've realised their own power just when they've understood their fate. The struggle against the inevitable is the greatest of all, and it's one that's always lain at the heart of metal. But whereas metal is all about fortifying yourself against the elements, Neurosis are fundamentally vulnerable.

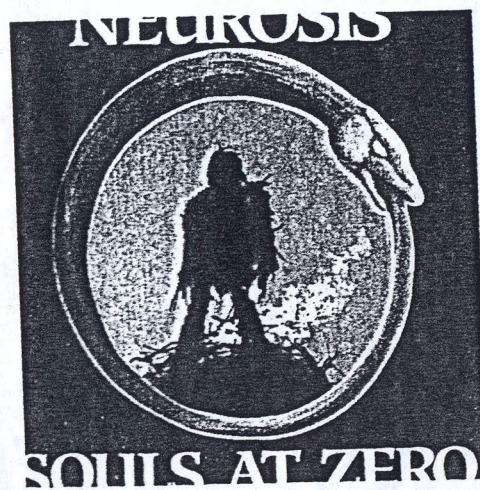
"To Crawl Under One's Skin" brings it all home, opening on a babble of doom-saying samples, guitars brewing up a storm and then settling before Scott Kelley and Steve Von Till come in on vocals. It escalates into a scorched earth nightmare, screeching through your skull like a heavy-duty drill. When Kelley and Von Till howl out, you can't tell whether they're exposing themselves, caving in, or both.

This isn't so much the new wave of metal as the last wave, a final, all-consuming purge. "A Chronology For Survival" barely leaves anything in its wake, just a violin twisting a medieval lament like an abandoned, loitering zephyr. The American underground's back is against the wall, but the choice left is whether to end it with a whimper or a bang. Neurosis are flying into the heart of the sun.

JON SELZER



NEUROSIS



NEUROSIS
'Souls At Zero'
(Alternative Tentacles)

Tracks: To Crawl Under One's Skin, Souls At Zero, Zero, The Web, A Chronology For Survival, Stripped, Takeahnose, Empty.

Producer: Neurosis & Bill Thompson

Studio: Starlight Sound

Country Of Origin: U.S.A

Neurosis state Black Flag, Black Sabbath, Skinny Puppy, Killing Joke, Pink Floyd and Chrome as their major influences. Hmm, that figures...

Dark, damp and bleak are the three words that best describe Neurosis, because this stuff certainly isn't happy. I'm not sure what it takes to write music like this, but a few months of deep depression followed by a couple of suicide attempts will probably do the trick. I'm not saying that 'Souls At Zero' makes you want to kill yourself but if you were gonna do it anyway, then this would provide the perfect soundtrack.

"Isolated so long, blighted by the first frost,

longing for the warmth of human touch," (from 'To Crawl Under One's Skin'). See what I mean? It's hardly light entertainment, both lyrically and musically. The word 'accessible' has never entered into this band's vocabulary and as the above-mentioned track suggests, this is music that, unbeknownst to the listener, works its way under your skin. Just when you've given up on ever getting into 'Souls At Zero' it all suddenly makes perfect sense. You've really got to sit with this one, but when the understanding begins to wash over you, it's an album you'll live with for a long, long time.

James Sherry

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**METAL
HAMMER**

AUGUST 1992

NEUROSIS

RAW

INDIES

JULY 22 - AUG 4

By Phil Alexander

NEUROSIS

Souls At Zero

Alternative Tentacles VIRUS 109

NEUROSIS COME on with all the sheer power of Ministry or Metallica with the corrosive vocal edge and experimentation of, say, Killdozer. The outcome is eight tracks of fiery distortion and bare-knuckled bruising that make for a pummeling alternative Metal ride.

SATELLITE TIMES AUGUST 1992

*Souls At Zero -
Neurosis (Alternative
Tentacles)*

Their press release states that amongst the band's influences are Pink Floyd and Joy Division - and that about sums up the sound they produce...but what it didn't mention is that the singer's voice comes from the pits of hell! A great monster of a sound - prime track is the rolling, thunderous *Crawl Under One's Skin*.

NEUROSIS



AUGUST 8

KEEPING!

NEUROSIS
'Souls At Zero'
(Alternative Tentacles
VIRUS109CD)

KK

TO BE honest, I played the first three minutes of 'Souls At Zero' and was too scared to carry on. I hid behind the sofa for about a fortnight. I figured this was dumb. It's only a goddamn record! It's not like it really exists. I tried it again with all the lights on, and that was okay.

Who listens to this shit? I mean, who listens to a whole album of this shit? It's a jagged, teeth-grating hypodermic soul irrigation and about as bleak as Antarctica. Ministry go on a bit as well, right? Neurosis just don't know when to take a f**king holiday.

The multi-textured Bay Area quintet have embraced the formidable Industrial technology and come on like maniacs in NASA. Complete with vocoded voices and sampled messages of doom, Neurosis manage to combine the grinding angst of Revco and the winding whimsy of Rush. The likes of 'A Chronology For Survival' and 'Stripped' are eight-minute epics cut with violin and drills. 'Takeahnase' is simpler and consequently far more enjoyable. You have to persevere to get there.

The intro's great. Predictably, however, Neurosis and their ilk blur the thin line between innovation and pretension. It's a long slog for even the most psychotic of depressives. Where the f**k have all the happy bunnies gone? **CHRIS WATTS**

NEUROSIS

Souls at Zero (Alternative Tentacles)
Heavy-duty grindcore which layers keyboard samples and tapes alongside raucous vocals, and combine personal anguish with an apocalyptic scenario. Nasty and noisy.
DG

SELECT AUGUST '92

NEUROSIS
Souls At Zero

ALTERNATIVE TENTACLES
First LP on Jello Biafra's label from the San Francisco band whose sound is one long apocalyptic howl from the void. They mix moments of ominous calm with sudden bursts of all-out guitar noise and screaming pain. It's a bit of a nightmare. As intended.



ANDREW PERRY



NEUROSIS

neurosis souls at zero (alternative tentacles)

In the rush to discover the new Nirvana, it's funny how everyone instantly forgets the previous rush to discover the new whoever. It all goes to prove the theory that the music industry and press have the attention spans of goldfish. In case you forgot, before *Teen Spirit*, we were all supposed to be looking for the next Jane's Addiction. Well, this is it. Kind of. If these comparisons mean anything to



with a taped voice of some Native American warning of future natural disasters if "we do not change our ways". Neurosis invoke ritual tension, cutting you.

Neurosis are the only band of the last three years to remind me of Perry Farrell's famous lines "they say that those were the days, but hey, maybe for us these are the days." Except that Perry forgot to add: the last days.

Susan Sontag remarked in the 70s that it was *Apocalypse From Now On*, and given the weight of cultural products fuelled almost exclusively by some intimation of the end of the world, you'd have to concede she was probably right. What makes the rock apocalypse of bands like Killing Joke, Levitation and Neurosis so horribly apt, so awfully right, is that nobody really does doubt that *Things Are Getting Worse*. Thus the awesome power at the heart of all this, a tear-clotted call to the disarmed. Wisdom is on their side, even if time isn't.

So *Stripped*, one of the centre-pieces on *Souls At Zero*, ranges through an involuted, three-part hymnal, complete with short bursts of Gregorian chanting, lamenting and protesting against some future police state. *Takeahnase* begins

from pastoral swathes to tidal waves of seismic crunch-rock drones, interspersed with a slightly gothic melancholy and a cacophony of sampled babble, and their own vocal abandon. At several points, on *A Chronicle For Survival* and *The Web*, Scott Kelly audibly jumps off into the beyond, flinging all behind him, a yell of "no" as electric as anything that man Farrell ever uttered.

The Jane's Addiction comparison isn't frivolous, nor does it come even near summing this San Franciscan band up. Killing Joke via Fugazi is about a mile off the mark, too. Somehow, they've managed to pull all the strings together, referring to every category of rock and, therefore, none. Like Mercury Rev, there's flutes, but also cellos, snippets of piano, trumpets, trombones mingled in with all this rock, never obtrusively, always effectively, a sprawling, bawling mass of music. This is so good, we're going to interview the fuckers as soon as we can.

Nick Terry

NEUROISIS

