



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 Tentacles 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 Eynochides, 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 *Komotion 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 goo smoulders 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!



14 SLOW MOTION APOCALYPSE Grotesque (Alternative Tentacles) "Like the Butthole Surfers, Young Gods, Ministry and Joy Division locked in a padded studio... with Satan at the mixing desk!" *Móral* (K/450)

CMJ NEW MUSIC REPORT



ON THE COVER!
JACKPOT!
Essential new music as chosen by CMJ's editorial staff
DECEMBER 6, 1991

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 Franciscan, 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 pooled 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-ruled 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 7").

ROCKPOOL

ALBUM PICKS

December 15, 1991

Grotus

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)

Brown

Spirit

**GROTUS - LUDDITE - LP/
CD - ALTERNATIVE
TENTACLES**

A Grotus 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/I had lost it. Matter were set to right on the A.T. front with the release of Nomeansno's magnificent Call Me Mr Happy EP.

Things get even better with Luddite - the new five-tracker from Grotus. 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

**Grotus - 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 umlaut-happy Grotus, 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

The Borderline, London

VERDICT: Herbivores from space!

TONIGHT, THIS compact sweatbox was packed to the beams with folk, most of whom were there to see sad gits Collapsed Lung. The real band of the night, though, were San Francisco's Grotus, with their Kong come New York Hardcore Funky noise.

While the band roared through tracks from their 'Slow Motion Apocalypse' album and 'Luddite' EP, a lone television screen flickered with homemade images of sickness and debauchery. Most provocative of all were the scenes that went behind the McDonalds myth, showing helpless cattle being barbarically slaughtered and tortured. The music itself seemed to be plunged into the background, while retaining a certain Industrial presence that thundered along with the pictures.

Towards the end of the proceedings, slaphead vocalist Lars Fox appeared wearing a cow hand-puppet which shared the mic for the remaining minutes. The routine was more macabre than amusing - no-one who was in the place will ever visit another burger bar!

By way of an encore, the quartet delivered a couple of massive Funk ditties before disappearing with their TV set and little cow. See this band!

JAMES COOPER

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. JOHN KING

RAW OCT 13-26TH
1993

TWO SEVENS ISSUE 7

hUsSaIn

NUCLEAR DEATH-For Our Dead-7"EP

G.G.F.H.-Disease-CD/Reality-CD/EP

LAIBACH-Macbeth-LP

MIND OVER FOUR-Half Way Down-CD

PRODIGY-Experience-CD

GROTUS-Slow Motion Apocalypse-CD *

INTERMIX-Phaze Two-CD

FEAR FACTORY-Fear Is The Mindkiller-CD/Soul Of A New Machine-LP

MEATHOOK SEED-Embedded-CD

MORBID ANGEL-Covenant-CD

ZUZU'S PETALS-When No One's Looking-LP

GRIEF-Grief-7"EP

DA LENCH MOB-Guerillas In The Mist-CD

DIE LAUGHING-Artificial Playground-tape

BAD RELIGION-Recipe For Hate-CD

GRUNTRUCK-Push-LP

PORNO FOR PYROS-Porno For Pyros-CD

GROTUS "Slow Motion Apocalypse" CD (Alternative Tentacles)

Another release that I was really looking forward to hearing and it doesn't disappoint. Hard to describe as GROTUS incorporate elements of so many different styles. This is truly exciting, original and fresh. They toured with MR. BUNGLE in the U.S. last year (though they don't sound anything alike) and they do operate in that off centre, weird and wacky way. The Alternative Tentacles ad said that they're self described as 'Crunch Rock', and there are elements of Rock, Industrial and Dance, plus samples and much more too. Highly recommended. (hUsSaIn)

GROCABRE JULY 93
NO.3

hocus

Grotus

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-messing Alternative Tentacles label, and yet 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 mutation". 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 left his "being in bands" era behind him, having become, as he coyly describes, an "active-ecologist". But he found himself singing vocals by night for the musical soundscapes his two friends, Adam Tanner and John Carson (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



(Back; l-r): Adam Tanner (guitar, samples); Bruce Boud (drums); John Larson (bass); (Front); Lars Fox (voice, drums)

MELODY MAKER OCT. 30TH '93

BEN IS DEAD

MARCH/APRIL 1992 ISSUE NO. 18



PHOTO: DON LEWIS

GROTUS

GROTUS • GAZZARI'S

The Grotus rhythm section pounded away with an almost sculptural effect as their frontman assisted on his own drum. Given the Gazzari's aesthetic of "rock god" stage placement, Grotus made a point of playing to the crowd, though the guitar player and bass player were almost lost in their hair and their ponchos. The singer is easily the most arresting I've seen since Alice Donut blew through town, and they claimed the crowd for their own—a difficult feat considering all the other bands on the bill were "locals" with big followings. Grotus has a big, taut sound, layers of almost metallish guitar work stretched to the breaking point across a thick supporting layer of bass and drums. Not an aural assault, not a wall of sound, not a bratty Beastie Boys act, but a musical and visual workout that gave Grotus a stature beyond that oh-so-rockstar Gazzari's stage. —Mikki

GROTUS *brown* Spirit

The dirgemasters 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 PC chanting of bald veggie overlord Lars Fox, the prole-clad, lookalike bass players Adam Tanner and John Carson pump their shit-stirring oars deep

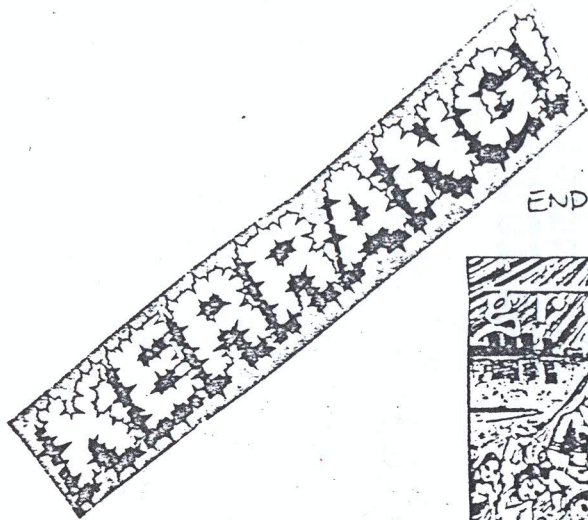
into the polluted swamps of the American experience.

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 extrusion machines. The resulting puddle of swirled goo smolders 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 sedated masses.

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





END OF YEAR REVIEW



ON HIGH ROTATION!

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

MIKE 'NORTHERN BOY' PEAKE

- 1 EARTH VERSUS THE WILDHEARTS The Wildhearts (EastWest)
- 2 DRAGLINE Paw (A&M)
- 3 EXCESS AND OVERDRIVE Treponem Pal (Roadrunner)
- 4 VS Pearl Jam (Epic)
- 5 CHAOS A.D. Sepultura (Roadrunner)
- 6 WOLVERINE BLUES Entombed (Earache)
- 7 DESENSITIZED Pitch Shifter (Earache)
- 8 VENUS LUXURE NO. 1 BABY Girls Against Boys (Touch And Go)
- 9 RETRO-ACTIVE Def Leppard (Bludgeon Riffola/Phonogram)
- 10 HEARTWORK Carcass (Earache)
- 11 BROTHER Cry Of Love (Columbia)
- 12 NUDESWIRL Nudeswirl (Music For Nations)
- 13 SOUND OF WHITE NOISE Anthrax (Elektra)
- 14 HATER Hater (A&M)
- 15 SLOW MOTION APOCALYPSE Grotus (Alternative Tentacles)
- 16 WALLFLOWER My Sister's Machine (Elektra)
- 17 AUGUST AND EVERYTHING AFTER Counting Cröwes (Geffen Import)
- 18 MERGE For Love Not Lisa (EastWest)
- 19 MACK AVENUE SKULL GAME Big Chief (SubPop)
- 20 POWERTRIPPIN' The Almighty (Polydor)

MORAT

- 1 SUPERJUDGE Monster Magnet (A&M)
- 2 WE MUST BURN Poison Idea (Vinyl Solution)
- 3 SUGARFIX The Dwarves (SubPop)
- 4 DESTROY-OH-BOY! New Bomb Turks (Crypt)
- 5 WOLVERINE BLUES Entombed (Earache)
- 6 SLOW MOTION APOCALYPSE Grotus (Alternative Tentacles)
- 7 DISEASE GGFH (Dreamtime)
- 8 NO CURE FOR CANCER Denis Leary (A&M)
- 9 UNDERTOW Tool (Zoo/RCA)
- 10 MINX Leatherface (Roughneck)
- 11 BASTARDS Motörhead (ZYX)
- 12 TRANSNATIONAL SPEEDWAY LEAGUE Clutch (EastWest)
- 13 CHAOS A.D. Sepultura (Roadrunner)
- 14 ANTIMATTER Cubanate (Dynamica)
- 15 DESENSITIZED Pitch Shifter (Earache)
- 16 ONE HUNDRED PER CENT TWO FINGERS IN THE AIR PUNK ROCK Chaos UK (Slap Up)
- 17 THE FULL CUSTOM SOUNDS OF THE REVEREND HORTON HEAT The Reverend Horton Heat (SubPop)
- 18 SESSIONS OF THE DAMNED The Damned (Strange Fruit)
- 19 BUDSPAWN Wool (London)
- 20 AMERICAN GRAFISHY Flipper (Beggars Banquet)

JASON 'REBEL' TAYLOR

- 1 INDEPENDENT WORM SALOON Butthole Surfers (Capitol)
- 2 SLOW MOTION APOCALYPSE Grotus (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 TRANSNATIONAL SPEEDWAY LEAGUE Clutch (EastWest)
- 8 HOUDINI 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 LUXURE NO. 1 BABY Girls Against Boys (Touch And Go)
- 14 CHAOS A.D. Sepultura (Roadrunner)
- 15 DESENSITIZER Pitch Shifter (Earache)
- 16 UNDERTOW Tool (Zoo/RCA)
- 17 INHALER Tad (RCA)
- 18 HEARTWORK Carcass (Earache)
- 19 MERGE For Love Not Lisa (EastWest)
- 20 IN ON THE KILLTAKER Fugazi (Dischord)

RAW - SEPT '93

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. 'Shelflife' 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-wordly 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. ***

IAN LAWTON

KERRANG - SEPT '93



GROTUS



*Highbury Garage, London
Thursday, September 9*

GROTUS ATTRACT a special kind of lunatic to their audience - but that is because Grotus are lunatics themselves. The two guitarists are wearing what look like African tribal dresses, while vocalist Lars Fox resembles Angry Anderson on angel dust.

Yes, Grotus are indeed a manic bunch, and this comes across in their stunning musical approach. It's like Ministry meets Test Dept, with wild, barbarous images flashed at us from a TV screen at the back of the stage. If anyone can guess how the hell the band keep the imagery spot-on in time to the music, then I'll drink the poison from Chris Watts' pen!

Few bands can stain the mind to this extent, and the sight of their two drummers, Bruce Boyd and vocalist Fox hammering away to a backdrop of pumping bass and haunting didgeridoo samples will remain with me for a long time. No wonder the nearest word to Grotus in the dictionary is 'grotesque'!

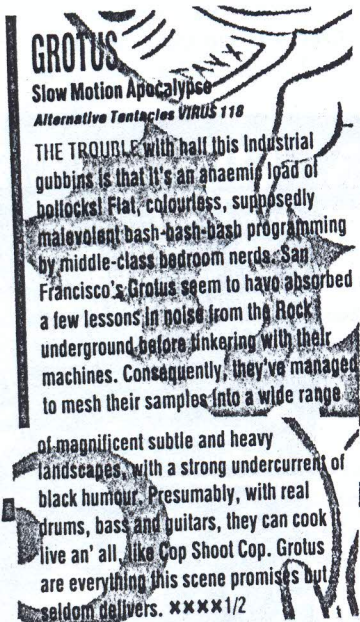
MÖRAT

GROTUS: Slow Motion Apocalypse

(Alternative Tentacles)

OPENER 'UP Rose The Mountain' is locked in a slow-burning, industrial dance gloom, but minus the Euro-techno kind – more a loose funk vibe supplied by toe-twitching bongos, sax and subtle 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 sultrier, 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

THE TROUBLE with half this industrial gubbins is that it's an anaemic load of bollocks! Flat, colourless, supposedly malevolent bash-bash-bash programming by middle-class bedroom nerds. San Francisco's Grotus seem to have absorbed a few lessons in noise from the Rock underground before tinkering with their machines. Consequently, they've managed to mesh their samples into a wide range of magnificent subtle and heavy landscapes, with a strong undercurrent of black humour. Presumably, with real drums, bass and guitars, they can cook live an' all like Cop Shoot Cop. Grotus are everything this scene promises but seldom delivers. ****1/2

IAN LAWTON 'RAW'

GROTUS Slow Motion Apocalypse (Alternative Tentacles VIRUS118)

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 comparisons: 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 ol' 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. ● 5 Leo Finlay

VOX JULY '93

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-Da-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 altruistic obsessions are not with the destruction of civilisation 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-relenting 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

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 'Shivayanama' – 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 you might have 'em sussed, right at the end they veer off into this wonderful tribal pulse, like the hoof-beats of the Four Horsemen way off in the distance.

The end is nigh, apparently.
Dress informal.

MÖRAT

KERRANG! 45

MELODY MAKER
17/7/93

**GROTUS - LUDDITE-
(ALTERNATIVE
TENTACLES)**

Does anyone out there actually read this long winded, pretentious, self righteous bollocks we write month after month under the heading 'Album reviews'?. If so, then you will have been lucky enough to have witnessed me praising Grotus in the last issue, heralding them the greatest thing ever to assault my eardrums. Well unfortunately there's more Grotus on those 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 puffs paradise, Europe are heavier than this bunch of pansies. 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 road 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.

5. 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 noiseniks **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 intelligent 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)
Spooky, grinding rock with an industrial menace and cyberpunk mentality. The overall sound is akin to some galactic battle and is refreshingly scary.6

TOTALLY WIRED 17

MUSIC

re-view

GROTUS

Duchess of York

More sartorially challenged than Zodiac Mindwarp, louder than - erm - just about anything, and making Henry Rollins resemble nothing so much as a librarian, **Grotus** are the most psychotic band to hit (literally) the Duchess for a long time. Frontman Lars Fox, in addition to playing drums with a maniacal intensity, was producing vocals from Hell's seventh circle (and if you looked at him 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

ATOMIC NOV/DEC 93

Grotus - Luddite

Cue dramatic news footage music, tape reels running backwards and launch into sampled mayhem mingling with bass sounds that are equal part bludgeoning and groove-some. Live, their film juxtaposing McDonalds' "wholesome" advertising image with atrocities committed against animals ought to be compulsory viewing for all carnivores. "What in the world" has us dashing past "this pregnant shuffling basketcase family, their smiling dirty faces ask for change, I mumble 'sorry' and pass 6 more like them" but the weird noises and rhythms elevate it way beyond a mere tract on the awfulness of the world.

PLANE TRUTH 12

GROTUS, hard-hitting San Franciscan tribal metal outfit, play Harlow Square (October 29), London Marquee (30), Derby Wherehouse (31), Newport TJ's (November 1), Preston Caribbean Club (2) and London New Cross Venue (5).

NME 16/10/93

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)!



TÖNGUE LASHING

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 Splrit 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 Nivek 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 parkas and swinging in silly unison. They know how to laugh at themselves: "Thank you for putting up with our bullshit, goodnight."



Grotus does assault the audience in much the same way as Skinny 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 lost in the garbled lyrics and samples: sheep strung up by one leg and relentlessly disgorged, heaping forks of dead flies shovelled through parted, silent lips, or animation borrowed from Walt Disney for psychedelic splashing. The juxtapositions are lucid: dinosaurs marching inexorably toward mushroom clouds, video war games, and charred Iraqi babies. Lars himself, five-foot five and bald, 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 may 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 "giant bloated 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 power-saw, 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. Soundbyte



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 Hennen

